

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

No. 125.]

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1861.

[PRICE 2d.]

A STRANGE STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MY NOVEL," "RIENZI," &c.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was with a wrath suppressed in the presence of the fair ambassador, that Mr. Vigors had received from Mrs. Poyntz the intelligence that I had replaced Dr. Jones at Abbots' House, not less abruptly than Dr. Jones had previously supplanted me. As Mrs. Poyntz took upon herself the whole responsibility of this change, Mr. Vigors did not venture to condemn it to her face: for the Administrator of Laws was at heart no little in awe of the Autocrat of Proprieties; as Authority, howsoever established, is in awe of Opinion, howsoever capricious.

To the mild Mrs. Ashleigh the magistrate's anger was more decidedly manifested. He ceased his visits; and in answer to a long and deprecatory letter with which she endeavoured to soften his resentment and win him back to the house, he replied by an elaborate combination of homily and satire. He began by excusing himself from accepting her invitations, on the ground that *his* time was valuable, *his* habits domestic; and though ever willing to sacrifice both time and habits where he could do good, he owed it to himself and to mankind to sacrifice neither where his advice was rejected and his opinion contemned. He glanced briefly, but not hastily, at the respect with which her late husband had deferred to his judgment, and the benefits which that deference had enabled him to bestow. He contrasted the husband's deference with the widow's contumely, and hinted at the evils which the contumely would not permit him to prevent. He could not presume to say what women of the world might think due to deceased husbands, but even women of the world generally allowed the claims of living children, and did not act with levity where their interests were concerned, still less where their lives were at stake. As to Dr. Jones, he, Mr. Vigors, had the fullest confidence in his skill. Mrs. Ashleigh must judge for herself whether Mrs. Poyntz was as good an authority upon medical science as he had no doubt she was upon shawls and ribbons. Dr. Jones was a man of caution and modesty; he did not indulge in the hollow boasts by which charlatans decoy their dupes; but Dr. Jones had privately

assured him that though the case was one that admitted of no rash experiments, he had no fear of the result if his own prudent system were persevered in. What might be the consequences of any other system, Dr. Jones would not say, because he was too high-minded to express his distrust of the rival who had made use of underhand arts to supplant him. But Mr. Vigors was convinced, from other sources of information (meaning, I presume, the oracular prescience of his clairvoyants), that the time would come when the poor young lady would herself insist on discarding Dr. Fenwick, and when "that person" would appear in a very different light to many who now so fondly admired and so reverentially trusted him. When that time arrived, he, Mr. Vigors, might again be of use; but, meanwhile, though he declined to renew his intimacy at Abbots' House, or to pay unavailing visits of mere ceremony, his interest in the daughter of his old friend remained undiminished, nay, was rather increased by compassion; that he should silently keep his eye upon her; and whenever anything to her advantage suggested itself to him, he should not be deterred by the slight with which Mrs. Ashleigh had treated his judgment, from calling on her, and placing before her conscience as a mother, his ideas for her child's benefit, leaving to herself then, as now, the entire responsibility of rejecting the advice which he might say, without vanity, was deemed of some value by those who could distinguish between sterling qualities and specious pretences.

Mrs. Ashleigh's was that thoroughly womanly nature which instinctively leans upon others. She was diffident, trustful, meek, affectionate. Not quite justly had Mrs. Poyntz described her as "common-place weak," for though she might be called weak, it was not because she was common-place; she had a goodness of heart, a sweetness of disposition, to which that disparaging definition could not apply. She could only be called common-place, inasmuch as in the ordinary daily affairs of life she had a great deal of ordinary daily common-place good sense. Give her a routine to follow, and no routine could be better adhered to. In the allotted sphere of a woman's duties she never seemed in fault. No household, not even Mrs. Poyntz's, was more happily managed. The old Abbots' House had merged its original antique gloom in the softer character of pleasing

repose. All her servants adored Mrs. Ashleigh; all found it a pleasure to please her; her establishment had the harmony of clockwork; comfort diffused itself round her like quiet sunshine round a sheltered spot. To gaze on her pleasing countenance, to listen to the simple talk that lapsed from her guileless lips in even, slow, and lulling murmur, was in itself a respite from "eating cares." She was to the mind what the colour of green is to the eye. She had, therefore, excellent sense in all that relates to every-day life. There, she needed not to consult another; there, the wisest might have consulted her with profit. But the moment anything, however trivial in itself, jarred on the routine to which her mind had grown wedded; the moment an incident hurried her out of the beaten track of woman's daily life, then her confidence forsook her; then she needed a confidant, an adviser, and by that confidant or adviser she could be credulously lured or submissively controlled. Therefore, when she lost, in Mr. Vigers, the guide she had been accustomed to consult whenever she needed guidance, she turned, helplessly and piteously, first to Mrs. Poyntz, and then yet more imploringly to me, because a woman of that character is never quite satisfied without the advice of a man. And where an intimacy more familiar than that of his formal visits is once established with a physician, confidence in him grows fearless and rapid, as the natural result of sympathy concentrated on an object of anxiety in common between himself and the home which opens its sacred recess to his observant but tender eye. Thus Mrs. Ashleigh had shown me Mr. Vigers's letter, and forgetting that I might not be as amiable as herself, besought me to counsel her how to conciliate and soften her lost husband's friend and connexion. That character clothed him with dignity and awe in her soft forgiving eyes. So, smothering my own resentment, less perhaps at the tone of offensive insinuation against myself than at the arrogance with which this prejudiced intermeddler implied to a mother the necessity of his guardian watch over a child under her own care, I sketched a reply which seemed to me both dignified and placatory, abstaining from all discussion, and conveying the assurance that Mrs. Ashleigh would be at all times glad to hear, and disposed to respect, whatever suggestion so esteemed a friend of her husband's would kindly submit to her for the welfare of her daughter.

There all communication had stopped for about a month since the date of my reintroduction to Abbots' House. One afternoon I unexpectedly met Mr. Vigers at the entrance of the blind lane, I on my way to Abbots' House, and my first glance at his face told me that he was coming from it, for the expression of that face was more than usually sinister; the sullen scowl was lit into significant menace by a sneer of unmistakable triumph. I felt at once that he had succeeded in some machination against me, and with ominous misgivings quickened my steps.

I found Mrs. Ashleigh seated alone in front of the House, under a large cedar-tree that formed a natural arbour in the centre of the sunny lawn. She was perceptibly embarrassed as I took my seat beside her.

"I hope," said I, forcing a smile, "that Mr. Vigers has not been telling you that I shall kill my patient, or that she looks much worse than she did under Dr. Jones's care?"

"No," she said. "He owned cheerfully that Lillian had grown quite strong, and said, without any displeasure, that he had heard how gay she had been; riding out and even dancing—which is very kind in him—for he disapproves of dancing,—on principle."

"But still, I can see he has said something to vex or annoy you; and, to judge by his countenance when I met him in the lane, I should conjecture that that something was intended to lower the confidence you so kindly repose in me."

"I assure you not; he did not mention your name, either to me or to Lillian. I never knew him more friendly; quite like old times. He is a good man at heart, very; and was much attached to my poor husband."

"Did Mr. Ashleigh profess a very high opinion of Mr. Vigers?"

"Well, I don't quite know that, because my dear Gilbert never spoke to me much about him. Gilbert was naturally very silent. But he shrank from all trouble—all worldly affairs—and Mr. Vigers managed his estate, and inspected his steward's books, and protected him through a long lawsuit which he had inherited from his father. It killed his father. I don't know what we should have done without Mr. Vigers, and I am so glad he has forgiven me."

"Hem! Where is Miss Ashleigh? In-doors?"

"No; somewhere in the grounds. But, my dear Dr. Fenwick, do not leave me yet; you are so very, very kind; and somehow I have grown to look upon you quite as an old friend. Something has happened which has put me out—quite put me out."

She said this wearily and feebly, closing her eyes as if she were indeed put out in the sense of extinguished.

"The feeling of friendship you express," said I, with earnestness, "is reciprocal. On my side it is accompanied by a peculiar gratitude. I am a lonely man, by a lonely fireside—no parents, no near kindred, and in this town, since Dr. Faber left it, without cordial intimacy till I knew you. In admitting me so familiarly to your hearth, you have given me what I have never known before since I came to man's estate: a glimpse of the happy domestic life; the charm and relief to eye, heart, and spirit which is never known but in households cheered by the face of woman; thus my sentiment for you and yours is indeed that of an old friend; and in any private confidence you show me, I feel as if I were no longer a lonely man, without kindred, without home."

Mrs. Ashleigh seemed much moved by these words, which my heart had forced from my lips, and, after replying to me with simple unaffected

warmth of kindness, she rose, took my arm, and continued thus as we walked slowly to and fro the lawn:

"You know, perhaps, that my poor husband left a sister, now a widow as myself, Lady Haughton."

"I remember that Mrs. Poyntz said you had such a sister, but I never heard you mention Lady Haughton till now. Well!"

"Well, Mr. Vigors has brought me a letter from her, and it is that which has put me out. I dare say you have not heard me speak before of Lady Haughton, for I am ashamed to say I had almost forgotten her existence. She is many years older than my husband was; of a very different character. Only came once to see him after our marriage. Hurt me by ridiculing him as a bookworm. Offended him by looking a little down on me, as a nobody without spirit and fashion, which was quite true. And, except by a cold and unfeeling letter of formal condolence after I lost my dear Gilbert, I have never heard from her since I have been a widow, till to-day. But, after all, she is my poor husband's sister, and his elder sister, and Lillian's aunt; and, as Mr. Vigors says, 'Duty is duty.'"

Had Mrs. Ashleigh said 'Duty is torture,' she could not have uttered the maxim with more mournful and despondent resignation.

"And what does this lady require of you, which Mr. Vigors deems it your duty to comply with?"

"Dear me! what penetration! You have guessed the exact truth. But I think you will agree with Mr. Vigors. Certainly I have no option; yes, I must do it."

"My penetration is in fault now. Do what? Pray explain?"

"Poor Lady Haughton, six months ago, lost her only son, Sir James. Mr. Vigors says he was a very fine young man, of whom any mother would have been proud; I had heard he was wild. Mr. Vigors says, however, that he was just going to reform, and marry a young lady whom his mother chose for him, when, unluckily, he would ride a steeplechase, not being quite sober at the time, and broke his neck. Lady Haughton has been, of course, in great grief. She has retired to Brighton; and she wrote to me from thence, and Mr. Vigors brought the letter. He will go back to her to-day."

"Will go back to Lady Haughton? What! has he been to her? Is he, then, as intimate with Lady Haughton as he was with her brother?"

"No; but there has been a long and constant correspondence. She had a settlement on the Kirby estate—a sum which was not paid off during Gilbert's life; and a very small part of the property went to Sir James, which part Mr. Ashleigh Sumner, the heir-at-law to the rest of the estate, wished Mr. Vigors, as his guardian, to buy during his minority, and as it was mixed up with Lady Haughton's settlement, her consent was necessary as well as Sir James's. So there was much negotiation, and, since then, Ashleigh Sumner has come into the Haughton

property, on poor Sir James's decease; so, that complicated all affairs between Mr. Vigors and Lady Haughton, and he has just been to Brighton to see her. And poor Lady Haughton, in short, wants me and Lillian to come and visit her. I don't like it at all. But you said the other day you thought sea air might be good for Lillian during the heat of the summer, and she seems well enough now for the change. What do you think?"

"She is well enough, certainly. But Brighton is not the place I would recommend for the summer; it wants shade, and is much hotter than L——."

"Yes, but unluckily Lady Haughton foresaw that objection, and she has a jointure-house some miles from Brighton, and near the sea. She says the grounds are well wooded, and the place is proverbially cool and healthy, not far from St. Leonard's Forest. And, in short, I have written to say we will come. So we must, unless, indeed, you positively forbid it."

"When do you think of going?"

"Next Monday. Mr. Vigors would have me fix the day. If you knew how I dislike moving when I am once settled; and I do so dread Lady Haughton, she is so fine, and so satirical. But Mr. Vigors says she is very much altered, poor thing. I should like to show you her letter, but I had just sent it to Margaret—Mrs. Poyntz—a minute or two before you came. She knows something of Lady Haughton. Margaret knows everybody. And we shall have to go in mourning for poor Sir James, I suppose; and Margaret will choose it, for I am sure I can't guess to what extent we should be supposed to mourn. I ought to have gone in mourning before—poor Gilbert's nephew—but I am so stupid, and I had never seen him. And—but oh, this is kind! Margaret herself—my dear Margaret!"

We had just turned away from the house, in our up and down walk; and Mrs. Poyntz stood immediately fronting us.

"So, Anne, you have actually accepted this invitation—and for Monday next?"

"Yes. Did I do wrong?"

"What does Dr. Fenwick say? Can Lillian go with safety?"

I could not honestly say she might not go with safety, but my heart sank like lead as I answered:

"Miss Ashleigh does not now need merely medical care; but more than half her cure has depended on keeping her spirits free from depression. She may miss the cheerful companionship of your daughter, and other young ladies of her own age. A very melancholy house, saddened by a recent bereavement, without other guests; a hostess to whom she is a stranger, and whom Mrs. Ashleigh herself appears to deem formidable—certainly these do not make that change of scene which a physician would recommend. When I spoke of sea air being good for Miss Ashleigh, I thought of our own northern coasts, at a later time of the year, when I could escape myself for a few weeks, and attend her. The

journey, too, would be shorter and less fatiguing; the air more invigorating."

"No doubt that would be better," said Mrs. Poyntz, dryly; "but so far as your objections to visiting Lady Haughton have been stated, they are groundless. Her house will not be melancholy; she will have other guests, and Lilian will find companions young like herself—young ladies and young gentlemen too!"

There was something ominous, something compassionate, in the look which Mrs. Poyntz cast upon me, in concluding her speech, which in itself was calculated to rouse the fears of a lover. Lilian away from me, in the house of a worldly fine lady—such as I judged Lady Haughton to be—surrounded by young gentlemen, as well as young ladies, by admirers, no doubt, of a higher rank and more brilliant fashion than she had yet known! I closed my eyes, and with strong effort suppressed a groan.

"My dear Anne, let me satisfy myself that Dr. Fenwick really *does* consent to this journey. He will say to me what he may not to you. Pardon me, then, if I take him aside for a few minutes. Let me find you here again under this cedar-tree."

Placing her arm in mine, and without waiting for Mrs. Ashleigh's answer, Mrs. Poyntz drew me into the more sequestered walk that belted the lawn; and, when we were out of Mrs. Ashleigh's sight and hearing, said:

"From what you have now seen of Lilian Ashleigh, do you still desire to gain her as your wife?"

"Still? Oh! with an intensity proportioned to the fear with which I now dread that she is about to pass away from my eyes—from my life!"

"Does your judgment confirm the choice of your heart? Reflect before you answer."

"Such selfish judgment as I had before I knew her would not confirm, but oppose it. The nobler judgment that now expands all my reasonings, approves and seconds my heart. No, no; do not smile so sarcastically. This is not the voice of a blind and egotistical passion. Let me explain myself if I can. I concede to you that Lilian's character is undeveloped. I concede to you that, amidst the childlike freshness and innocence of her nature, there is at times a strangeness, a mystery, which I have not yet traced to its cause. But I am certain that the intellect is organically as sound as the heart, and that intellect and heart will ultimately—if under happy auspices—blend in that felicitous union which constitutes the perfection of woman. But it is because she does, and may for years, may perhaps always, need a more devoted, thoughtful care than natures less tremulously sensitive, that my judgment sanctions my choice; for whatever is best for her is best for me. And who would watch over her as I should?"

"You have never yet spoken to Lilian as lovers speak?"

"Oh no, indeed."

"And, nevertheless, you believe that your affection would not be unreturned?"

"I thought so once—I doubt now—yet, in doubting, hope. But why do you alarm me with these questions? You, too, forebode that in this visit I may lose her for ever?"

"If you fear that, tell her so, and perhaps her answer may dispel your fear."

"What now, already, when she has scarcely known me a month! Might I not risk all if too premature?"

"There is no almanack for love. With many women love is born the moment they know they are beloved. All wisdom tells us that a moment once gone is irrevocable. Were I in your place, I should feel that I approached a moment that I must not lose. I have said enough; now I shall rejoice Mrs. Ashleigh."

"Stay—tell me first what Lady Haughton's letter really contained to prompt the advice with which you so transport, and yet so daunt, me when you proffer it."

"Not now—later, perhaps—not now. If you wish to see Lilian alone, she is by the old Monks' Well; I saw her seated there as I passed that way to the house."

"One word more—only one. Answer this question frankly, for it is one of honour. Do you still believe now that my suit to her daughter would not be disapproved of by Mrs. Ashleigh?"

"At this moment, I am sure it would not; a week hence I might not give you the same answer."

So she passed on, with her quick but measured tread, back through the shady walk, on to the open lawn, till the last glimpse of her pale grey robe disappeared under the boughs of the cedar-tree. Then, with a start, I broke the irresolute, tremulous suspense in which I had vainly endeavoured to analyse my own mind, solve my own doubts, concentrate my own will, and went the opposite way, skirting the circle of that haunted ground; as now, on one side its lofty terrace, the houses of the neighbouring city came full and close into view, divided from my fairyland of life but by the trodden murmurous thoroughfare winding low beneath the ivied parapets; and as now, again, the world of men abruptly vanished behind the screening foliage of luxuriant June.

At last the enchanted glade opened out from the verdure, its borders fragrant with syringa, and rose, and woodbine; and there, by the grey memorial of the gone Gothic age, my eyes seemed to close their unquiet wanderings, resting spell-bound on that image which had become to me the incarnation of earth's bloom and youth.

She stood amidst the Past, backed by the fragments of walls which man had raised to seclude him from human passion, locking under those lids so downcast, the secret of the only knowledge I asked from the boundless Future.

Ah, what mockery there is in that grand word, the world's fierce war-cry, Freedom! Who has not known one period of life, and that so solemn that its shadows may rest over all life hereafter, when one human creature has over him a sovereignty more supreme and abso-

lute than Orient servitude adores in the symbols of diadem and sceptre? What crest so haughty that has not bowed before a hand which could exalt or humble? What heart so dauntless that has not trembled to call forth the voice at whose sound ope the gates of rapture or despair? That life alone is free which rules and suffices for itself. That life we forfeit when we love!

CHAPTER XVII.

How did I utter it? By what words did my heart make itself known? I remember not. All was as a dream that falls upon a restless, feverish night, and fades away as the eyes unclose on the peace of a cloudless heaven, on the bliss of a golden sun. A new morrow seemed indeed upon the earth when I woke from a life-long yesterday;—her dear hand in mine, her sweet face bowed upon my breast.

And then there was that melodious silence in which there is no sound audible from without; yet within us there is heard a lulling celestial music, as if our whole being, grown harmonious with the universe, joined from its happy deeps in the hymn that unites the stars.

In that silence our two hearts seemed to make each other understood, to be drawing near and nearer, blending by mysterious concord into the completedness of a solemn union, never henceforth to be rent asunder.

At length I said softly: "And it was here, on this spot, that I first saw you—here, that I for the first time knew what power to change our world and to rule our future goes forth from the charm of a human face!"

Then Lilian asked me timidly, and without lifting her eyes, how I had so seen her, reminding me that I promised to tell her, and had never yet done so.

And then I told her of the strange impulse that had led me into the grounds, and by what chance my steps had been diverted down the path that wound to the glade; how suddenly her form had shone upon my eyes, gathering round itself the rose hues of the setting sun; and how wistfully those eyes had followed her own silent gaze into the distant heaven.

As I spoke, her hand pressed mine eagerly, convulsively, and, raising her face from my breast, she looked at me with an intent, anxious earnestness. That look!—twice before it had thrilled and perplexed me.

"What is there in that look, oh, my Lilian, which tells me that there is something that startles you—something you wish to confide, and yet shrink from explaining? See how, already, I study the fair book from which the seal has been lifted, but as yet you must aid me to construe its language."

"If I shrink from explaining, it is only because I fear that I cannot explain so as to be understood or believed. But you have a right to know the secrets of a life which you would link to your own. Turn your face aside from me; a reproving look, an incredulous smile, chill—oh! you cannot guess how they chill me—when I

would approach that which to me is so serious and so solemnly strange."

I turned my face away, and her voice grew firmer as, after a brief pause, she resumed:

"As far back as I can remember in my infancy, there have been moments when there seems to fall a soft hazy veil between my sight and the things around it, thickening and deepening till it has the likeness of one of those white fleecy clouds which gather on the verge of the horizon when the air is yet still, but the winds are about to rise, and then this vapour or veil will suddenly open, as clouds open and let in the blue sky."

"Go on," I said, gently, for here she came to a stop.

She continued, speaking somewhat more hurriedly:

"Then, in that opening, strange appearances present themselves to me, as in a vision. In my childhood these were chiefly landscapes of wonderful beauty. I could but faintly describe them then; I could not attempt to describe them now, for they are almost gone from my memory. My dear mother chid me for telling her what I saw, so I did not impress it on my mind by repeating it. As I grew up, this kind of vision—if I may so call it—became much less frequent, or much less distinct; I still saw the soft veil fall, the pale cloud form and open, but often what may then have appeared was entirely forgotten when I recovered myself, waking as from a sleep. Sometimes, however, the recollection would be vivid and complete: sometimes I saw the face of my lost father; sometimes I heard his very voice, as I had seen and heard him in my early childhood, when he would let me rest for hours beside him as he mused or studied, happy to be so quietly near him—for I loved him, oh, so dearly! and I remember him so distinctly, though I was only in my sixth year when he died. Much more recently—indeed, within the last few months—the images of things to come are reflected on the space that I gaze into as clearly as in a glass. Thus, for weeks before I came hither, or knew that such a place existed, I saw distinctly the old House, yon trees, this sward, this moss-grown Gothic fount, and, with the sight, an impression was conveyed to me that in the scene before me my old childlike life would pass into some solemn change. So that when I came here, and recognised the picture in my vision, I took an affection for the spot; an affection not without awe; a powerful, perplexing interest, as one who feels under the influence of a fate of which a prophetic glimpse has been vouchsafed. And in that evening, when you first saw me, seated here——"

"Yes, Lilian, on that evening——?"

"I saw you also, but in my vision—yonder, far in the deeps of space—and—and my heart was stirred as it had never been before; and near where your image grew out from the cloud I saw my father's face, and I heard his voice, not in my ear, but as in my heart, whispering——"

"Yes, Lillian, whispering—what?"

"These words—only these—" Ye will need one another.' But then, suddenly, between my upward eyes and the two forms they had beheld, there rose from the earth, obscuring the skies, a vague dusky vapour, undulous, and coiling like a vast serpent, nothing, indeed, of its shape and figure definite, but of its face one abrupt glare; a flash from two dread luminous eyes, and a young head, like the Medusa's, changing, more rapidly than I could have drawn breath, into a grinning skull. Then my terror made me bow my head, and when I raised it again, all that I had seen was vanished. But the terror still remained, even when I felt my mother's arm round me and heard her voice. And then, when I entered the House, and sat down again alone, the recollection of what I had seen—those eyes—that face—that skull—grew on me stronger and stronger till I fainted, and remember no more, until my eyes, opening, saw you by my side, and in my wonder there was not terror. No, a sense of joy, protection, hope, yet still shadowed by a kind of fear or awe, in recognising the countenance which had gleamed on me from the skies before the dark vapour had risen, and while my father's voice had murmured, 'Ye will need one another.' And now—and now—will you love me less that you know a secret in my being which I have told to no other—cannot construe to myself?—only—only, at least, do not mock me—do not disbelieve me. Nay, turn from me no longer now:—now I ask to meet your eyes. Now, before our hands can join again, tell me that you do not despise me as untruthful, do not pity me as insane."

"Hush—hush!" I said, drawing her to my breast. "Of all you tell me we will talk hereafter. The scales of our science have no weights fine enough for the gossamer threads of a maiden's pure fancies. Enough for me—for us both—if out from all such illusions start one truth, told to you, lovely child, from the heavens; told to me, ruder man, on the earth—repeated by each pulse of this heart that woos you to hear and to trust;—now and henceforth through life unto death—" Each has need of the other—"I of you—I of you! my Lillian—my Lillian!"

DR. WILKINS'S PROPHETIC DREAMS.

INSTANTANEOUS and, in case of need, secret communication has advanced within a few years through the successive phases of a wild vision; a bare possibility looming in the distance, a reality too strange to be fully appreciated, and an ordinary matter of fact. That it was a short time ago the first, is as certainly true as that it is regarded now as a mere sixpenny convenience, but, like many other of the most important and interesting discoveries of modern science, before even the knowledge of which it is born had come into the world, telegraphy had its prophetic announcement. Shortly after the discovery of printing, and the religious and political ferment that followed closely upon that discovery,

there was an amount of speculative prescience among the pursuers of science that has at no other time been equalled. Men were not overloaded with facts, and they allowed their imaginative and poetic faculties full play. Very vague and uncertain, no doubt, was the glimpse of futurity they got; but it was often real, and much of it has since been fully verified.

It is now just two centuries ago that the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn selected as their preacher the Reverend Dr. John Wilkins, at that time a puritanical clergyman, in the forty-sixth year of his age, not unknown to his contemporaries, but chiefly remarkable for his great skill in what were then called "the mathematics." Preachers were then, as now, selected for the Inns of Court with the liberal toleration that looks straight at a man's worth, and Dr. Wilkins was an able, earnest clergyman, as well as the author of works on the physical science of his day, which might even at present be considered little recommendation to a society of gentlemen learned in the law. He was one of that small but distinguished body of learned men to whom England is indebted for the foundation of the "Royal Society for the improvement of natural knowledge"—a body which has since included, and still includes, most of those who have chiefly distinguished themselves in the pursuit of science in England. Appointed Warden of Wadham College, Oxford, in 1648, during the troublesome political disturbances of the great rebellion, Dr. Wilkins does not seem to have meddled much with politics, but, marrying a sister of Oliver Cromwell, then Protector of England, he naturally attached himself to the ruling party. His time, however, at Oxford was occupied in pursuits congenial to his tastes, for there were held at his rooms those meetings, commenced at the lodging of Dr. Petty, at which were assembled the Honourable Mr. Robert Boyle, Dr. Willis, Mr. Ashmole (founder of the Ashmolean museum), Dr. Seth Ward (afterwards Bishop of Salisbury), Dr. (afterwards Sir Christopher) Wren, Dr. (afterwards Sir William) Petty, and many others. These kindred spirits discussed subjects antiquarian, astrologic, medical, and mechanical, rather than political, and laid the foundation of a club which afterwards ripened into the much more important institution we have named.

At the Restoration, Dr. Wilkins, who had retained the appointment of master of his college after his marriage, contrary to the statutes and by a dispensation from Cromwell, was, of course, ejected, and, coming to London, his fortune was for some time at the lowest ebb, for he was out of favour both at court and at Lambeth, and could hardly expect much preferment. He did not, however, for this reason slacken in the pursuit of what then passed for natural philosophy, but continued to communicate on such subjects with his scientific friends. He also formed one of a party who met at Gresham College, first, to hear the lectures there given, and afterwards for "mutual converse," every Wednesday afternoon during term time at three

o'clock, "where, amongst other matters that were discoursed of, something was offered about a design of founding a college for the promoting of physico-mathematical experimental learning."

"There arose at this time," as Dr. Whewell observes, "a group of philosophers, who began to knock at the door where truth was to be found, although it was left for Newton to force it open." These earnest and honest men were the actual founders of the Royal Society, and among the foremost of them stands the Reverend Dr. Wilkins.

It was while thus occupied that our philosopher received the appointment of preacher at Gray's Inn. His affairs and finances being thereby improved, and his position in London established, he presided on the 28th November, 1660, over a remarkable meeting, at which it was finally decided to form a society for the pursuit of natural knowledge. This society having shortly afterwards been mentioned to the king, his approval and encouragement were obtained, and, being announced on the following 5th December, the Royal Society may be said to have been from that time established.

The chairman of a meeting at which so remarkable a body received life must ever be regarded as a personage in English science. But he was also a remarkable man in himself, for in spite of his puritanical opinions and his intermarriage with the family of the arch-rebel, he contrived to put himself on good terms both with the political and ecclesiastical authorities after the Restoration. Thus, in 1662, when the first charter of the Royal Society was granted by King Charles the Second, we find among those mentioned as members of the first "and modern" council of twenty-one, to whom was devolved the important duty of selecting the first fellows of the society, Robert Boyle, Kenelm Digby, William Petty, Christopher Wren, and others, with "John Wilkins, Doctor of Divinity," as worthy associates for so worthy a purpose, the object of the society being "to confer about the hidden causes of things, with a design to establish certain and correct uncertain theories in philosophy, and by their labours in the disquisition of nature to prove themselves real benefactors to mankind."

In the year preceding that in which the charter was granted to the Royal Society, Dr. Wilkins had been presented to a living in the City in the gift of the crown, and soon afterwards he was promoted to the deanery of Ripon. In 1668 he was appointed to the bishopric of Chester, and, we are told by his biographer, that in the exercise of his important functions in the latter part of his career (which terminated in 1672) "he filled his episcopal office with a goodness answerable to the rest of his life, but with a prudence above it, considering the two extremes of popery and fanaticism, which were nowhere then so much as in his diocese."

Turning now to consider the scientific dreams and discoveries of Dr. Wilkins, we begin with a work published in 1638, entitled *A Discovery*

of a New World; or, a Discourse tending to prove that it is probable there may be another Habitable World in the Moon: with a Discourse concerning the Possibility of a Passage thither. This idea of the moon being inhabited was not then new, and has not quite passed out of date. While at one time we are told that the absence of atmosphere and water would render life on it impossible, at another time astronomers suggest the possibility of vapour and atmosphere different, perhaps, from that to which we are accustomed, but by no means incapable of supporting a mooncalf. As to the passage thither, indeed, no practicable means have ever been suggested, for although the author of the tract before us believes that the earth's attraction, supposed by him to be a kind of magnetism, might be overcome in various ways mechanically, more complete knowledge of the nature of the force of gravitation has added greatly to the improbability that we can ever move ourselves beyond its local influence. This, therefore, is a prophecy unaccomplished, and is likely to remain so.

A year or two after the publication of the essay just referred to, Wilkins published a treatise entitled *Mercury; or, the Swift and Sure Messenger: showing how a Man may, with Privacy and Speed, communicate his Thoughts to a Friend at any Distance*. Concerning this book the following doggerel lines of a certain Richard West, who edited a second edition some years afterwards, will serve to give a general notion. He tells us that not only are we there to learn the way of attaining perfect secrecy in communication, but

Our thoughts will now arrive before they're stale:
They shall no more wait on carrier's ale
And hostess—two land *remoraes*, which bind
All to a tortoise-pace though words be wind.
This book's a better ark: we brook no stay,
Maugre the deepest flood or foulest way.

Afterwards addressing the author, the editor, rising into a higher poetic vein, exclaims:

Then your diviner hieroglyphicks tell,
How we may landscapes read and pictures spell.
You teach how clouds inform, how smoaks advise;
Then saints will incense talk to deities.

* * * * *

'Tis not like juggler's tricks, absurd when shown,
But more and more admired the more 'tis known.

Writing's an act of emanation,
And thoughts speed quick and far as day doth run.

Doggerel indeed! Marvellous revelations would be expected from such an announcement; and, although the first glance at the book suggests a notion that the secrets thus trumpeted are somewhat shabby and lean, there are some exceedingly singular suggestions mixed up with odd and apparently unmeaning matter. The art of secret information generally is defined and set forth in great minuteness of detail, and with a distinct Greek and Latin nomenclature worthy of a new science. It includes three branches: the first of which is a kind of arranged nonsense-talk made up of broken words, and corresponds well with the

peculiar jargon that school-children have adopted from time immemorial when discussing their affairs with favourite companions. The second department includes the formation and use of cypher alphabets, often invented and modified with great ingenuity, but always capable of being made out when there is any real necessity for doing so. The third method is a kind of short-hand, but the key to this, like that of cyphers, and also like that of many written languages almost lost, can be with singular ease discovered, owing to the much greater abundance of certain letters and words in every language than others, and an invariable and inevitable law thus obtained. All these methods or departments of secret communication, curious and ingenious enough at the time, may now be said to have little value, and possess no general interest.

While, however, describing these familiar and not very useful secrets, our author suggests others far less probable, as it might seem at the time, but which have been found more useful and practicable. Thus he speaks of "a flying chariot than which imagination itself cannot conceive any one more useful, since by this means a man may have as free a passage as a bird, which is not hindered by the highest walls, or the deepest rivers and trenches, or the most watchful sentinels." It is true that the notion of sailing through the air like birds is of very ancient date, and that Roger Bacon states that he has heard of a machine to accomplish this purpose. But it seems certain that no human being ever actually ascended far into the air in any floating balloon till, in 1783, the brothers Montgolfier made their first successful experiment near Lyons, in France. It would be difficult, however, to find words to express in smaller space, or with greater reference to the modern contrivances of balloons, all that these machines can perform, than those made use of in the above short extract. Balloons, indeed, have not yet been made useful, except on a small scale, in war, but that is because they cannot yet be guided. When this is secured, the prophetic description will be perfect.

On the subject of rapid communication of news generally, we find in this same work a reference to "three saturnine angels and certain images by which in the space of twenty-four hours a man may be informed of news from any part of the world." If the saturnine angels or messengers be translated to mean metallic wires, and the images the dial-plates of telegraphic instruments, all that is apparent in the electric telegraph would be described, but as the nature of the power or influence is not alluded to, the hint is hardly sufficient. Much more distinct, however, is the sentence that follows shortly after, when "certain fabulous relations that concern secret and swift conveyances," are thus described. "Let there be two needles provided of an equal length and business, being both of them touched with the same loadstone. Let the letters of the alphabet be placed in the circles on which they are moved, as the points

of the compass under the needle of the mariner's chart. Let the friend that is to travel take one of them with him, first agreeing upon the days and hours wherein they should confer together, at which times, if one of them move the needle of his instrument to any letter of the alphabet, the other needle, by a sympathy, will move unto the same letter in the other instrument, though they be never so far distant. And thus, by several motions of the needle to the letters they may easily make up any words or sense which they have a mind to express."

Dr. Wilkins, while he thus describes what he was informed could be done, evidently has grave doubts as to its possibility. He observes, first, "that every natural agent is supposed to have some certain sphere, which determines its activity," and therefore that this sympathy between distant magnets was improbable. Secondly, he says, that "magnetical operations do not arise from mere sympathy, but from such a diffusion of these magnetical qualities through the medium that they may be continued from the agent to the patient." Still he describes and refers to it as to a fact, and it is not a little curious to see in this suggestion of a result only recently attained, how completely the imagination has gone ahead of the observing and reflective faculties. The principle involved in all practical telegraphic operations, that of making soft iron magnetic by passing through it a galvanic current, and the facility thus obtained of making and unmaking a magnet at will is not referred to in these speculations, and is altogether a modern invention. The communication of magnetic currents by metallic wires, although exceedingly useful and generally adopted, is not so essential, and thus one very small step, and one only, really separates this suggestion, doubtful even to the suggestor, from the marvellous realisation of our own day.

There is something exceedingly interesting in looking back to the infancy of science and tracing the foreshadowing of great inventions in the mind of an ingenious man, whose imaginative and poetic intellect was enabled to overleap the mechanical difficulties that for centuries prevented the successful carrying out into practice of the ideas he entertained. It may be very doubtful whether such guesses and vague fancies really assist the more matter-of-fact discoverer in after times, but there is no doubt that they prepare the minds of men, and keep alive an excitement which may often tend in its operation to promote discovery.

One word more with regard to the apparent vagueness of the accounts, and even the impossibility of obtaining a fairly accurate notion of the details, when such men as Bishop Wilkins set forth their ideal views of what science is doing or will do. Although what they wrote seems to us now so unpractical, we must not conclude that men of this stamp were without wisdom and honesty, or that they did not exert themselves to the utmost, according to their knowledge and powers, for the improvement and enlightenment of mankind. They had but few

facts to work upon, and little experience of accurate observers to fall back upon. Everything around them was equally new and wonderful, and if they had not generalised by instinct they never could have arrived at the useful conclusions that we frequently meet with, and the suggestions that abound in their works. Step by step knowledge has advanced; one after another the various sciences and departments of science have taken their natural place in the great series. At one time minute accuracy of detail, and at another broad generalisations, have marked the advance, but those have not been the least valuable friends to scientific research who have collected the facts and suggested the practical applications that might possibly result from them. There was something of prophecy even in the scientific dreams of Dr. Wilkins, because he loved truth, and pursued science for its own sake. The difference between the habit of thought in such a man two centuries ago and at the present time is not greater than the difference that exists between the early and later memoirs published in the Transactions of that learned body of which Bishop Wilkins was a founder.

SANDS OF LIFE.

THERE are two (if not more, for there are thirty-six Montreuls in all) well-known Montreuls in France. One, inland, near Paris, Montreuil-aux-Pêches, is distinguished by the peaches for which it is famous. The other, a small fortified sous-prefectural town on the top of a hill, overlooking the valley of the Canche, is called Montreuil-sur-Mer, although it is several miles distant from the English Channel. This is the Montreuil of which Nelson wrote, "We lodged in the same inn, and under the auspices of the same cheerful landlord who supplied Sterne with his servant Lafleur. We would gladly have remained at Montreuil, but neither good lodgings nor good company are to be had. There is no middle class at all; the town is inhabited by some sixty noble families, who are the owners of great part of the neighbouring country, while all the rest are very poor. Very few places have such good shooting. Partridges are twopence-halfpenny the brace; pheasants and woodcocks, as well as poultry in general, are equally cheap. Thirty-six hours spent at Montreuil made us regret that we had to leave it."

Since Nelson's letter was put into the post, Montreuil has made great advances in everything—the price of partridges included. Without any dearth of landed proprietors, there is also a middle class, besides good lodgings and good society, with good fish and good fowl, and, above all, a good physician, Doctor Paul Perrochaud, who is the hero of the following story:

The doctor was once a little boy, perhaps not a little spoiled, and doubtless given to house-building with cards, and to peopling small wooden mansions with dolls. Such must have been the pursuits of his childhood, for the child is father to the man. The only difference now, is, that instead of a wooden Swiss farm and its

appendages, which may be taken to pieces and put into a box, he has a wooden hospital with wooden offices, and a wooden chapel, which he can undo, and shift about, and put together again, as whim or wisdom may direct; also that, instead of wooden haymakers and shepherds and sheep, he has a staff of Sisters of Charity really alive and active in their black and white costume: with a collection of one hundred boys and girls who squeak, make faces, and float in the water, as naturally as the most expensive doll to be found in all London.

Everybody has his hobby; Dr. Perrochaud's hobby is SCROFULOUS CHILDREN. And why not? A scrofulous child is far more interesting than a healthy child. In fact, a healthy child is uninteresting. It never gives you the excitement of fearing that it should go blind, or should melt away to nothing, or become frightful to behold with abscesses and scars, or be a cripple for life with white swellings and stiff joints, if consumption do not shorten its sufferings. With a healthy child, you have no need to sit up o' nights, watching whether the flame of life is to go out speedily or to flicker on a little longer. A healthy child never gives you the pleasure of observing the results of successful treatment—the look that assures a fresh hold on existence, the increasing flesh, the clearer complexion, the smile.

But if the scrofulous child be also a poor child—the child of parents confined within large cities, or a foundling child in a foundling hospital, fatherless and motherless—our interest in the child increases tenfold. It is a romance in one volume, whose tedious chapters we cannot skip and turn to the end to satisfy our curiosity. Actual life is an unflinching reader; we must follow every individual page before we can arrive at the conclusion. How strong the interest, is proved by the way in which the appetite grows with the indulgence. Dr. Perrochaud began with nursing one scrofulous child; he now has one hundred under his wing; he hopes in a year or two to get some four or five hundred together in his expansive and movable hospital.

France is not ravaged with scrofula so severely as several other countries of Europe. There is more scrofula in England than in France, and still more in Holland than in England. But there is yet enough scrofulous disease in France to put a medical man upon his mettle. Ever since popular credulity withdrew its faith from the touch of kings, the Faculty have been anxiously inquiring, Where is the remedy, what is the specific, against that dreadful disease the King's Evil?

According to Michelet, it was reserved for England to solve the problem. One of the most striking features of England at the present day are her innumerable marine villas, the love of a sea-side residence, and the bathing continued late into the autumn; all which are modern, premeditated, and intentional habits. The Duke of Newcastle asked Dr. Russell why, in so many of the fairest forms, rottenness lay hid beneath

lilies and roses? The doctor, by way of answer, published, in 1750, a book entitled *De Tabæ Glandulari, seu de Usu Aquæ Marinæ* (On Glandular Disease, or the Use of Sea-Water). His object was, through its use, not to cure but to remake and recreate his patients. He proposed to work a miracle, although a possible miracle; namely, to make new flesh, to create fresh tissues. It follows clearly that he greatly preferred to work upon children. At that period, Bakewell had just invented meat; cattle, which had hitherto scarcely supplied anything else besides milk, were in future to yield a more generous aliment. Russell, on his part, by this little book, most opportunely invented the sea; that is to say, he made it the fashion.

His whole system may be resumed in one word—**THE SEA**. You must drink sea-water; you must bathe in it, and you must eat all sorts of marine things—shell-fish, fish proper, seaweeds (there is not a single poisonous marine vegetable), in which its virtue is concentrated. Secondly, Dr. Russell ordered his scrofulous children to be very slightly clad, and always exposed to the air; sea-air and sea-water, at their natural temperatures, and nothing more, were his remedies. The latter prescription was bold and decided practice, which is followed with considerable modifications by practitioners of the present day. To keep a child half-naked in a damp and variable climate, amounted to a resolution to sacrifice the weakest. The strongest only would survive; and the race, perpetuated by them alone, would be reinstated in its pristine vigour.

Last December, M. Michelet received a small pamphlet from Italy. Opposite the title-page were the portraits of two children, of whom one died and the other was dying, in the hospitals of Florence. Its author was the hospital doctor, who took the fate of his little patients so keenly to heart that he could not help expressing his sorrow and regret; for which he alleges as his excuse, that "These dear children would not have died, if they could have been sent to the sea." Conclusion: A hospital for children must be established on the coast. The doctor's appeal went home to people's hearts. Without waiting for government assistance, an independent society immediately founded a Children's Bathing Establishment, at Viareggio.

The benevolent Florentine's idea had already been anticipated in France by Messieurs Frère and Perrochaud (the former sub-inspector of the assisted children belonging to the Department of the Seine, who are placed out in the arrondissement of Montreuil-sur-Mer; the latter the physician charged with the medical care of the said children), who, in April, 1857, placed in the village of Groffiers, on the Channel coast, several children in a desperate state of rickets and scrofulism.

The reader here ought to be informed that the Administration Générale de l'Assistance Publique at Paris is almost a sort of ministry, rivalling in importance the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of War, the Ministry of

Worship and Public Instruction, or any other branch of the government. Its office is a large building close to Notre Dame. It manages the affairs of all hospitals, infirmaries, almshouses, founding hospitals, out-door and in-door relief, and every other public act of charity connected with the department of the Seine. Its powers are very great; lately, it has established hospitals of convalescence for sick persons recovering from illnesses, who have been treated in hospitals proper, or elsewhere; and we see that it has sent scrofulous children to the sea-side. It has immense revenues at its disposal, roughly estimated at from two hundred and fifty thousand, to three hundred thousand pounds sterling per annum. It levies a tribute of ten per cent on the profits of all theatrical performances, balls, concerts, circuses, and amusements of every kind, in Paris. It has landed property, interest from funds, payments from public markets, profits of the Mont-de-Piété, or Public Pawnbroker, a good slice out of the income of the octroi tax, besides the special endowments of the hospitals, &c. The whole of this money must be expended on charitable purposes only, and not on paving, drainage, or any other work of public utility, however commendable. Any one who has served for thirty years in a hospital, or other charitable establishment in Paris, is entitled to a maintenance for life from the Administration Générale de l'Assistance Publique. It will be seen, therefore, what an enormous power for good is wielded by the director-general.

The cure, by sea-bathing, of the above-mentioned little patients encouraged MM. Frère and Perrochaud to demand from the director-general, an authorisation to place, by way of experiment, in a private house on the beach at Berck, as many scrofulous children as could be attended to by the person who undertook to board and lodge them. In '58 and '59, more than fifty children of both sexes, sent to Berck by the Administration, were completely cured of the scrofulous affections under which they were suffering.

These results, as satisfactory as they were unexpected, decided the Administration, in the month of May, 1860, to confide to Messieurs Frère and Perrochaud more than sixty of their scrofulous and rickety protégés. In consequence of the salutary influence of sea-bathing on these last patients, Monsieur le Directeur Général, wishing to give the scrofulous children under his administration a new proof of his incessant solicitude for their welfare, authorised the erection, on the beach at Berck, of a hospital containing one hundred beds: which are now occupied, in the proportion of a third each, by scrofulous children selected from the hospitals Sainte Eugénie, des Enfants Malades, and des Enfants Assistés. Every child, before its departure, is carefully examined, and a note of its condition is drawn up by competent physicians belonging to the Paris hospitals. All the details of the treatment of each, with the effects of sea-side residence and saline baths, on the

constitution, are to be described in a second notice, which will accompany the child on its return to Paris, where it will be examined again. The Administration will thus be able to form a competent judgment as to the value of the new therapeutic means which it places at the disposal of its medical men. Every fortnight, a detailed account of the state of each child is sent to Paris, so that the parents (of such as have parents) can know how their children are going on. And that is the history of Dr. Perrochaud's pet hospital.

But although the overgrown wooden toy is dilatable and transferable at pleasure, there is no thought of removing it from its present site, which is all that can be wished. Suppose, Reader, you come with us, for an easy and recreative jaunt, and take a look at it.

In less than an hour, the Boulogne Railway drops us at the station of Montreuil-Verton. A road running off to the left would take us inland to Montreuil itself; we follow, instead, seaward, a road to the right, which leads us through a sandy plain of pleasant pasture and close-cropped meadows to the large long loose-twisted village of Berck: an irregular street of three thousand inhabitants, which seems to be continually creeping onward, like a colossal worm protruding its snout of new-built houses, in the hope of one day reaching the sea. The centre of the vermicular burgh bulges out into a cavity or hollow stomach, wherein are contained a well, some benches serving as market stalls, and, studded along the ribs of the village, sundry retailers of meat and drink.

Out of the village, we have the sandy plain again, still sandier, bearing tufts of marram-grass, sea-side convolvulus, and other members of the maritime flora. The place is flooded with light and with dry pure air; there are no marshes near, no stagnant pools; no river is discharging itself and bringing down decaying vegetable deposits. Before us is the deep blue sea, and an enormous area of yellow sandy beach, impregnated only with the bromine and iodine left by the retiring tide, stretching right and left with no visible boundary. The extent would be oppressive to the mind, were it not relieved and broken up by scores of stranded fishing-boats, some in full employment, with masts and rigging, others retired on half-pay, and roofed with thatch. After a few steps, the scene groups itself into a sparkling picture, with wooden erections on either side, cottages at the service of strangers, lodgings clean but not luxurious, where a regimen of coddling is impossible. Thus, at the clean-looking sign of the emperor's godson, Louis Eugène Drapier receives lodgers for the baths—and we presume for no other purpose on earth. The whole is overlooked by the considerable Hôtel de la Plage, and the more considerable Hôtel des Bains, where good entertainment and pleasant company are to be found. All this, being in front of the boundary of sandhills, constitutes a world of the shore quite distinct from the world of fields. We have left inland life and town life far behind us.

Where, but here, would you find planted, in the middle of your path, a board with an inscription thus poetically and decorously conceived:

defense est faite aux hommes de venir se baigner
sans avoir un caleçon que chacun doit porter
de même sur la plage un homme en nudité
subira les rigueurs d'une autre autorité
le maire fontaine

Done freely into English, thus:

no man who comes to bathe may ever here
without a proper bathing-dress appear
nude individuals are sure to be
punished by gendarmes and authority
the mayor fontaine

A few steps to the left, passing a Russian lady's wooden cottage villa, and we are within hail of a wooden terrace, on whose railing several children's windmills are spinning, while merry voices salute us with shouts of "Bonjour, Monsieur Perrochaud!" The plan of the hospital is seen at a glance—three sides of a square, open to the sea, with an isolated box-chapel in the middle. The whole takes to pieces, and may be enlarged. The wing on one side is occupied by boys, that on the opposite side by girls. These are connected by a sort of gallery which, besides containing a passage or corridor, is partitioned off into the doctor's room; the sisters' refectory; the linen-room, with sheets, and every needful article of clothing, coarse, but well-aired, and in apple-pie order; the pharmacy, or apothecary's-room, where medicines are perfectly well dispensed by a sister who purposely studied two years in a druggist's shop; and the kitchen, redolent of savoury smells, the cooking also being done by neat-handed culinary sisters.

"Some soup, my sister,* if you please." It is a meagre Wednesday for the hard-working Franciscans; for the children it is a meat day, all the same. "Excellent soup, indeed, my sister; suppose we try a little more." And we enjoy a hearty plateful, with carrot and bread, without scruple of robbing the poor. The city of Paris and the Administration Générale pay for all, and can afford without grudging, this slight refreshment to the passing traveller.

As these poor children are made to partake of sea-bathing and sea-side lodgings, like the children of the rich, so are they fed with the diet of the rich, to strengthen their feebleness and spur on their constitutions. Pleasant little extras are forthcoming, when required; green or blue curtains, and green spectacles for the weak of sight. Take note that the director-general has conceived the notion that the children's cure *may be hastened by spoiling them*. Every mother will understand this novel principle of hospital treatment. This smart collection of barrows and rakes, playthings which will enjoy a reign of eight-and-forty hours, was sent only the other day, in order that the patients may amuse themselves with removing the sand, which drifts into the front court and also into their playgrounds, like snow. When tired of this,

* Religious women are addressed as, "Ma soeur," the Mother Superior as "Ma mère."

they have their gymnastic apparatus to go to; as soon as that begins to pall, there are their little shrimping-nets to tempt them to paddle in the salt sea waves, and catch what shrimps and crabs they can. Was there ever a child that did not delight to dabble in water? Bravo, Monsieur Husson, director-general! Your heart is in your work. The children who are to be kept through the winter will have warm water to bathe and dabble in.

Here is their dietary for three successive days: Tuesday: breakfast, bread-and-butter, with milk to drink; dinner, soup with vegetables, roast mutton (the dearest meat in France), baked potatoes; supper, soup, roast mutton, fish. Wednesday: breakfast, milk-soup and bread; dinner, meat-soup, boiled beef, fresh vegetables; supper, soup, beef ragoût, with French plums in it. Thursday: breakfast, bread-and-butter and milk; dinner, soup with vegetables, roast veal, potatoes; supper, soup, roast veal, potatoes.

The day is thus occupied during summer: Rise at six; prayers and mass at seven; breakfast at half-past seven; from eight till nine, school, nominal, most of the children being too seriously ill to attend to anything of the kind; the least unwell learn a little catechism and A B C; walk and play from nine till ten; sea-bathing and medical dressings from ten till half-past eleven. At half-past eleven, dinner.

Recreation from twelve till one; from one till two, the doctor's visit; from two till three, school, nominal, mostly taken up with the doctor's prolonged inspection; from three till half-past four, sea-bathing—which is performed twice a day—and medical dressings; at half-past four, "gouter," a little bit of something to stay the stomach; from five to half-past six, walk and play; at seven, supper; at eight, extraordinary medical dressings, and to bed.

It thus appears that the little patients are pretty nearly made to play away their scrofula. "Let us work away!" cry the afflicted play-mates, as they proudly barrow off the sand. The wholesome sea influences are manifested by the fact that children, after having been ill for four or five years, have got well here in six or eight weeks. At Berck there are two distinct populations—the rope-makers and cord-spinners, comparatively ill-conditioned; and the fishermen and fishwomen, handsome, robust, and ruddy. Advantage is taken of everything derived from the sea; it is found that the so-called samphire, really glasswort (*Salicornia*), used as a vegetable, is a useful substitute for cod-liver oil.

It will be taken for granted that such an establishment is provided with every requisite room and office, with dining and work-rooms, bath-rooms, wound-dressing-rooms, washhouses, drying-houses, and infirmaries for boys and girls: one just now occupied with cases of scrofulous ophthalmia, requiring constant and careful attendance on the part of the good Franciscan nuns. Each dormitory has its washing-place with a separate basin, numbered, for each patient: separate towel, comb, brush, sponge, and little bag of toilet articles hanging beneath it

against the wall. Between two dormitories is a surveillance chamber, or glazed watch-room, occupied by the sister on duty for the night.

It is the hour for the doctor to visit his patients. Here they come to be visited, finding their way up-stairs as well as they can: the halt being helped on by those who have only abscesses and sores; some limping, some scarred, bloated, and swollen, but all powdered with sand, and smiling, to be reviewed. Every iron bedstead is numbered at the head, and has a ticket bearing the occupant's name. The temporary owner of the bed stands (when he *can* stand) at the foot, and we pass very leisurely between the double row of cheery sufferers, followed by attendant sisters, note-book in hand, with a kind word, a tap on the cheek, an order, an admonition, or a joke, for each. The poor little child who came in lately, like an overgrown spider, with distended body and meagre limbs, looks up and laughs, as it crawls on the floor at the foot of its bed; hope is dimpling in its mouth and chin. That womanly thoughtful girl, sitting up in bed with the enormously swelled knee, uncovers it complacently. Ah! It hurts her to touch it! Very well; let the plaster remain. She is recovering; she has slept well, the last two nights. Yes; she says with evident confidence in the future, she has slept very well indeed. And these rosy cheeks, and these laughing eyes, can *they* belong to sick children? Ah, yes! They are all sick, have been very sick, otherwise they would not be here. This merry face, however, and that, will be sent back to Paris next week, to gladden homes relieved of a deep care.

And who are they that bear the great brunt of the burden, from day to day, and from hour to hour? Who, but the good Franciscan Sisters? They have not withdrawn from the world to meditate in solitude on religious mysteries; they do not say too many prayers, nor repeat interminable Aves and Paternosters; their life is a continued prayer—of thanksgiving and beneficence. Doubtless they will have their reward; for you may read in their countenances that they have it already. Adieu, Mother Superior! I thank you heartily for the good work I have enjoyed the privilege of seeing.

Works of real charity are sure to find followers in the United Kingdom; the idea of sea-side hospitals, for the reception of inland patients, is good. It has been suggested that so excellent a sanitary measure need not be confined to children only, but may be advantageously extended to adults. "Every large town contains within itself another over-peopled town—the hospital—to which the worn-out workman retires, again and again, incessantly. He dies young, leaving his family a charge on the public. It would be much easier to prevent his falling ill, than to cure him when once he is really ill. The man for whom much may be done, is not the man who is already sick, but the man who is likely to become sick, in consequence of the exhaustion of his strength. Ten days' repose by the sea-side would set him right

again, and be the means of saving a solid workman. The transport, the simple shelter needed for so short a summer sojourn, a low-priced public ordinary, would, altogether, cost infinitely less than a long stay in a hospital. The man would be saved; and with him," adds Michelet, "his wife and children." If the cure be not radical, life is, at least, eased and prolonged.

PARTING DAY.

THE sunset burns, the hamlet spire
Gleams grandly, sheathed in evening fire,
The river rolleth red.

The flowers are drenched in floating haze,
The churchyard brightens, and old days
Seem smiling on the dead.

From pendent boughs, like drops of gold
The peaches hang; the mansion old
From out its nest of green,
Looks joyful through its golden eyes
Back on the sunset-burnished skies
A smile o'er all the scene.

The running child, whose wavy hair
Takes from the sunset's level glare
A purer, brighter tinge,
Rolls on the grass; the evening star
Above yon streak of cloudy bar
Hangs on Day's purple fringe.

Where latest sunshine slanting falls,
Above the ivied orchard walls,
The tall tree-shadows lean,
In waving lines of shade, that nod
Like dusky streams across the road
With banks of light between.

The streams are gilt, the towering vane
Stands burnished; and the cottage pane
Seems melting in the sun;
The last lark wavers down the sky,
The husky crow slides careless by,
The golden day is done.

FOUR STORIES.

ALL four shall be told exactly as I, the present narrator, have received them. They are all derived from credible sources; and the first—the most extraordinary of the four—is well known at first hand to individuals still living.

Some few years ago a well-known English artist received a commission from Lady F. to paint a portrait of her husband. It was settled that he should execute the commission at F. Hall, in the country, because his engagements were too many to permit his entering upon a fresh work till the London season should be over. As he happened to be on terms of intimate acquaintance with his employers, the arrangement was satisfactory to all concerned, and on the 13th of September he set out in good heart to perform his engagement.

He took the train for the station nearest to F. Hall, and found himself, when first starting, alone in a carriage. His solitude did not, however, continue long. At the first station out of London, a young lady entered the carriage, and took

the corner opposite to him. She was very delicate looking, with a remarkable blending of sweetness and sadness in her countenance, which did not fail to attract the notice of a man of observation and sensibility. For some time neither uttered a syllable. But at length the gentleman made the remarks usual under such circumstances, on the weather and the country, and, the ice being broken, they entered into conversation. They spoke of painting. The artist was much surprised by the intimate knowledge the young lady seemed to have of himself and his doings. He was quite certain that he had never seen her before. His surprise was by no means lessened when she suddenly inquired whether he could make, from recollection, the likeness of a person whom he had seen only once, or at most twice? He was hesitating what to reply, when she added, "Do you think, for example, that you could paint me from recollection?"

He replied that he was not quite sure, but that perhaps he could.

"Well," she said, "look at me again. You may have to take a likeness of me."

He complied with this odd request, and she asked, rather eagerly:

"Now, do you think you could?"

"I think so," he replied; "but I cannot say for certain."

At this moment the train stopped. The young lady rose from her seat, smiled in a friendly manner on the painter, and bade him good-by: adding, as she quitted the carriage, "We shall meet again soon." The train rattled off, and Mr. H. (the artist) was left to his own reflections.

The station was reached in due time, and Lady F.'s carriage was there, to meet the expected guest. It carried him to the place of his destination, one of "the stately homes of England," after a pleasant drive, and deposited him at the hall door, where his host and hostess were standing to receive him. A kind greeting passed, and he was shown to his room: for the dinner-hour was close at hand.

Having completed his toilet, and descended to the drawing-room, Mr. H. was much surprised, and much pleased, to see, seated on one of the ottomans, his young companion of the railway carriage. She greeted him with a smile and a bow of recognition. She sat by his side at dinner, spoke to him two or three times, mixed in the general conversation, and seemed perfectly at home. Mr. H. had no doubt of her being an intimate friend of his hostess. The evening passed away pleasantly. The conversation turned a good deal upon the fine arts in general, and on painting in particular, and Mr. H. was entreated to show some of the sketches he had brought down with him from London. He readily produced them, and the young lady was much interested in them.

At a late hour the party broke up, and retired to their several apartments.

Next morning, early, Mr. H. was tempted by the bright sunshine to leave his room, and stroll out into the park. The drawing-room opened

into the garden; passing through it, he inquired of a servant who was busy arranging the furniture, whether the young lady had come down yet?

"What young lady, sir?" asked the man, with an appearance of surprise.

"The young lady who dined here last night."

"No young lady dined here last night, sir," replied the man, looking fixedly at him.

The painter said no more: thinking within himself that the servant was either very stupid or had a very bad memory. So, leaving the room, he sauntered out into the park.

He was returning to the house, when his host met him, and the usual morning salutations passed between them.

"Your fair young friend has left you?" observed the artist.

"What young friend?" inquired the lord of the manor.

"The young lady who dined here last night," returned Mr. H.

"I cannot imagine to whom you refer," replied the gentleman, very greatly surprised.

"Did not a young lady dine and spend the evening here yesterday?" persisted Mr. H., who in his turn was beginning to wonder.

"No," replied his host; "most certainly not. There was no one at table but yourself, my lady, and I."

The subject was never reverted to after this occasion, yet our artist could not bring himself to believe that he was labouring under a delusion. If the whole were a dream, it was a dream in two parts. As surely as the young lady had been his companion in the railway carriage, so surely she had sat beside him at the dinner-table. Yet she did not come again; and everybody in the house, except himself, appeared to be ignorant of her existence.

He finished the portrait on which he was engaged, and returned to London.

For two whole years he followed up his profession: growing in reputation, and working hard. Yet he never all the while forgot a single lineament in the fair young face of his fellow-traveller. He had no clue by which to discover where she had come from, or who she was. He often thought of her, but spoke to no one about her. There was a mystery about the matter which imposed silence on him. It was wild, strange, utterly unaccountable.

Mr. H. was called by business to Canterbury. An old friend of his—whom I will call Mr. Wyld—resided there. Mr. H., being anxious to see him, and having only a few hours at his disposal, wrote as soon as he reached the hotel, begging Mr. Wyld to call upon him there. At the time appointed the door of his room opened, and Mr. Wyld was announced. He was a complete stranger to the artist; and the meeting between the two was a little awkward. It appeared, on explanation, that Mr. H.'s friend had left Canterbury some time; that the gentleman now face to face with the artist was another Mr. Wyld; that the note intended for the absentee had been given to him; and that he had obeyed

the summons, supposing some business matter to be the cause of it.

The first coldness and surprise dispelled, the two gentlemen entered into a more friendly conversation; for Mr. H. had mentioned his name, and it was not a strange one to his visitor. When they had conversed a little while, Mr. Wyld asked Mr. H. whether he had ever painted, or could undertake to paint, a portrait from mere description? Mr. H. replied, never.

"I ask you this strange question," said Mr. Wyld, "because, about two years ago, I lost a dear daughter. She was my only child, and I loved her very dearly. Her loss was a heavy affliction to me, and my regrets are the deeper that I have no likeness of her. You are a man of unusual genius. If you could paint me a portrait of my child, I should be very grateful."

Mr. Wyld then described the features and appearance of his daughter, and the colour of her eyes and hair, and tried to give an idea of the expression of her face. Mr. H. listened attentively, and, feeling great sympathy with his grief, made a sketch. He had no thought of its being like, but hoped the bereaved father might possibly think it so. But the father shook his head on seeing the sketch, and said, "No, it was not at all like." Again the artist tried, and again he failed. The features were pretty well, but the expression was not hers; and the father turned away from it, thanking Mr. H. for his kind endeavours, but quite hopeless of any successful result. Suddenly a thought struck the painter; he took another sheet of paper, made a rapid and vigorous sketch, and handed it to his companion. Instantly, a bright look of recognition and pleasure lighted up the father's face, and he exclaimed, "That is she! Surely you must have seen my child, or you never could have made so perfect a likeness!"

"When did your daughter die?" inquired the painter, with agitation.

"About two years ago; on the 13th of September. She died in the afternoon, after a few days' illness."

Mr. H. pondered, but said nothing. The image of that fair young face was engraven on his memory as with a diamond's point, and her strangely prophetic words were now fulfilled.

A few weeks after, having completed a beautiful full-length portrait of the young lady, he sent it to her father, and the likeness was declared, by all who had ever seen her, to be perfect.

Among the friends of my family was a young Swiss lady, who, with an only brother, had been left an orphan in her childhood. She was brought up, as well as her brother, by an aunt; and the children, thus thrown very much upon each other, became very strongly attached. At the age of twenty-two the youth got some appointment in India, and the terrible day drew near when they must part. I need not describe the agony of persons so circumstanced. But the mode in which these two sought to mitigate the anguish of separation was singular. They agreed that if either should die before the young

man's return, the dead should appear to the living.

The youth departed. The young lady by-and-by married a Scotch gentleman, and quitted her home, to be the light and ornament of his. She was a devoted wife, but she never forgot her brother. She corresponded with him regularly, and her brightest days in all the year were those which brought letters from India.

One cold winter's day, two or three years after her marriage, she was seated at work near a large bright fire, in her own bedroom up-stairs. It was about mid-day, and the room was full of light. She was very busy, when some strange impulse caused her to raise her head and look round. The door was slightly open, and, near the large antique bed, stood a figure, which she, at a glance, recognised as that of her brother. With a cry of delight she started up, and ran forward to meet him, exclaiming, "Oh, Henry! How could you surprise me so! You never told me you were coming!" But he waved his hand sadly, in a way that forbade approach, and she remained rooted to the spot. He advanced a step towards her, and said, in a low soft voice, "Do you remember our agreement? I have come to fulfil it;" and approaching nearer he laid his hand on her wrist. It was icy cold, and the touch made her shiver. Her brother smiled, a faint sad smile, and, again waving his hand, turned and left the room.

When the lady recovered from a long swoon there was a mark on her wrist, which never left it to her dying day. The next mail from India brought a letter, informing her that her brother had died on the very day, and at the very hour, when he presented himself to her in her room.*

Overhanging the waters of the Frith of Forth there lived, a good many years ago, a family of old standing in the kingdom of Fife: frank, hospitable, and hereditary Jacobites. It consisted of the squire, or laird—a man well advanced in years—his wife, three sons, and four daughters. The sons were sent out into the world, but not into the service of the reigning family. The daughters were all young and unmarried, and the eldest and the youngest were much attached to each other. They slept in the same room, shared the same bed, and had no secrets one from the other. It chanced that among the visitors to the old house there came a young naval officer, whose gun-brig often put in to the neighbouring harbours. He was well received, and between him and the elder of the two sisters a tender attachment sprang up.

But the prospect of such an alliance did not quite please the lady's mother, and, without being absolutely told that it should never take place, the lovers were advised to separate. The

* In the Beresford story, a similar ineffaceable mark is said to have been made by an apparition on a lady's wrist. It may be worth consideration whether, under very exceptional and rare conditions, there is thus developed in women any erratic manifestation of the power a mother sometimes has, of marking the body of her unborn child.

plea urged, was, that they could not then afford to marry, and that they must wait for better times. Those were times when parental authority—at all events in Scotland—was like the decree of fate, and the lady felt that she had nothing left to do, but to say farewell to her lover. Not so he. He was a fine gallant fellow, and, taking the old lady at her word, he determined to do his utmost to push his worldly fortunes.

There was war at that time with some northern power—I think with Prussia—and the lover, who had interest at the Admiralty, applied to be sent to the Baltic. He obtained his wish. Nobody interfered to prevent the young people from taking a tender farewell of each other, and, he full of hope, and she desponding, they parted. It was settled that he should write by every opportunity; and twice a week—on the post days at the neighbouring village—the younger sister would mount her pony and ride in for letters. There was much hidden joy over every letter that arrived, and then intense anxiety until the next arrived. And often and often the sisters would sit at the window a whole winter's night listening to the roar of the sea among the rocks, and hoping and praying that each light, as it shone far away, might be the signal-lamp hung at the mast-head to apprise them that the gun-brig was coming. So weeks stole on in hope deferred, and there came a lull in the correspondence. Post-day after post-day brought no letters from the Baltic, and the agony of the sisters, especially of the betrothed, became almost unbearable.

They slept, as I have said, in the same room, and their window looked down well-nigh into the waters of the Frith. One night, the younger sister was awakened by the heavy moanings of the elder. They had taken to burning a candle in their room, and placing it in the window: thinking, poor girls, that it would serve as a beacon to the brig. She saw by its light that her sister was tossing about, and was greatly disturbed in her sleep. After some hesitation she determined to awaken the sleeper, who sprang up with a wild cry, and, pushing back her long hair with her hands, exclaimed, "What have you done, what have you done!" Her sister tried to soothe her, and asked tenderly if anything had alarmed her. "Alarmed!" she answered, still very wildly, "no! But I saw him! He entered at that door, and came near the foot of the bed. He looked very pale, and his hair was wet. He was just going to speak to me, when you drove him away. O what have you done, what have you done."

I do not believe that her lover's ghost really appeared, but the fact is certain that the next mail from the Baltic brought intelligence that the gun-brig had gone down in a gale of wind, with all on board.

When my mother was a girl about eight or nine years old, and living in Switzerland, the Count R. of Holstein, coming to Switzerland for his health, took a house at Vevay, with the in-

tention of remaining there for two or three years. He soon became acquainted with my mother's parents, and between him and them acquaintance ripened into friendship. They met constantly, and liked each other more and more. Knowing the count's intentions respecting his stay in Switzerland, my grandmother was much surprised by receiving from him one morning a short hurried note, informing her that urgent and unexpected business obliged him to return that very day to Germany. He added, that he was very sorry to go, but that he must go; and he ended by bidding her farewell, and hoping they might meet again some day. He quitted Vevay that evening, and nothing more was heard of him or his mysterious business.

A few years after this departure, my grandmother and one of her sons went to spend some time at Hamburg. Count R., hearing that they were there, went to see them, and brought them to his castle of Breitenburg, where they were to stay a few days. It was a wild but beautiful district, and the castle, a huge pile, was a relic of the feudal times, which, like most old places of the sort, was said to be haunted. Never having heard the story upon which this belief was founded, my grandmother entreated the count to tell it. After some little hesitation and demur, he consented:

"There is a room in this house," he began, "in which no one is ever able to sleep. Noises are heard in it continually, which have never been accounted for, and which sound like the ceaseless turning over and upsetting of furniture. I have had the room emptied, I have had the old floor taken up and a new one laid down, but nothing would stop the noises. At last, in despair, I had it walled up. The story attached to the room is this:

"Some hundreds of years ago, there lived in this castle a countess, whose charity to the poor and kindness to all people were unbounded. She was known far and wide as 'the good Countess R.,' and everybody loved her. The room in question was her room. One night, she was awakened from her sleep by a voice near her; and looking out of bed, she saw, by the faint light of her lamp, a little tiny man, about a foot in height, standing near her bedside. She was greatly surprised, but he spoke, and said, 'Good Countess of R., I have come to ask you to be godmother to my child. Will you consent?' She said she would, and he told her that he would come and fetch her in a few days, to attend the christening; with those words he vanished out of the room.

"Next morning, recollecting the incidents of the night, the countess came to the conclusion that she had had an odd dream, and thought no more of the matter. But, about a fortnight afterwards, when she had well-nigh forgotten the dream, she was again roused at the same hour and by the same small individual, who said he had come to claim the fulfilment of her promise. She rose, dressed herself, and followed her tiny guide down the stairs of the castle. In the centre of the court-yard there was, and

still is, a large square well, very deep, and stretching underneath the building nobody knew how far. Having reached the side of this well, the little man blindfolded the countess, and bidding her not fear, but follow him, descended some unknown stairs. This was for the countess a strange and novel position, and she felt uncomfortable; but she determined at all hazards to see the adventure to the end, and descended bravely. They reached the bottom, and when her guide removed the bandage from her eyes, she found herself in a room full of small people like himself. The christening was performed, the countess stood godmother, and at the conclusion of the ceremony, as the lady was about to say good-by, the mother of the baby took a handful of wood shavings which lay in a corner, and put them into her visitor's apron.

"You have been very kind, good Countess of R.," she said, "in coming to be godmother to my child, and your kindness shall not go unrewarded. When you rise to-morrow, these shavings will have turned into metal, and out of them you must immediately get made, two fishes and thirty silberlingen (a German coin). When you get them back, take great care of them, for so long as they all remain in your family everything will prosper with you; but, if one of them ever gets lost, then you will have troubles without end." The countess thanked her, and bade them all farewell. Having again covered her eyes, the little man led her out of the well, and landed her safe in her own court-yard, where he removed the bandage, and she never saw him more.

"Next morning the countess awoke with a confused notion of some extraordinary dream. While at her toilet, she recollected all the incidents quite plainly, and racked her brain for some cause which might account for it. She was so employed when, stretching out her hand for her apron, she was astounded to find it tied up, and, within the folds, a number of metal shavings. How came they there? Was it a reality? Had she not dreamed of the little man and the christening? She told the story to the members of her family at breakfast, who all agreed that whatever the token might mean, it should not be disregarded. It was therefore settled that the fishes and the silberlingen should be made, and carefully kept among the archives of the family. Time passed; everything prospered with the house of R. The King of Denmark loaded them with honours and benefits, and gave the count high office in his household. For many years all went well with them.

"Suddenly, to the consternation of the family, one of the fishes disappeared, and, though strenuous efforts were made to discover what had become of it, they all failed. From this time everything went wrong. The count then living, had two sons; while out hunting together, one killed the other; whether accidentally or not, is uncertain, but, as the youths were known to be perpetually disagreeing, the case seemed doubtful. This was the beginning of sorrows. The king, hearing what had occurred, thought

it necessary to deprive the count of the office he held. Other misfortunes followed. The family fell into discredit. Their lands were sold, or forfeited to the crown; till little was left but the old castle of Breitenburg and the narrow domain which surrounded it. This deteriorating process went on through two or three generations, and, to add to all other misfortunes, there was always in the family one mad member.

"And now," continued the count, "comes the strange part of the mystery. I had never placed much faith in these mysterious little relics, and I regarded the story in connexion with them as a fable. I should have continued in this belief, but for a very extraordinary circumstance. You remember my sojourn in Switzerland a few years ago, and how abruptly it terminated? Well. Just before leaving Holstein, I had received a curious wild letter from some knight in Norway, saying that he was very ill, but that he could not die without first seeing and conversing with me. I thought the man mad, because I had never heard of him before, and he could have no possible business to transact with me. So, throwing the letter aside, I did not give it another thought.

"My correspondent, however, was not satisfied. He wrote again. My agent, who in my absence opened and answered my letters, told him that I was in Switzerland for my health, and that, if he had anything to say, he had better say it in writing, as I could not possibly travel so far as Norway.

"This, however, did not satisfy the knight. He wrote a third time, beseeching me to come to him, and declaring that what he had to tell me was of the utmost importance to us both. My agent was so struck by the earnest tone of the letter, that he forwarded it to me: at the same time advising me not to refuse the entreaty. This was the cause of my sudden departure from Vevay, and I shall never cease to rejoice that I did not persist in my refusal.

"I had a long and weary journey, and once or twice I felt sorely tempted to stop short, but some strange impulse kept me going. I had to traverse well-nigh the whole of Norway; often for days on horseback, riding over wild moorland, heathery bogs, mountains and crags and lonely places, and ever at my left the rocky coast, lashed and torn by the surging waters.

"At last, after some fatigue and hardship, I reached the village named in the letter, on the northern coast of Norway. The knight's castle—a large round tower—was built on a small island off the coast, and communicated with the land by a drawbridge. I arrived there, late at night, and must admit that I felt misgivings when I crossed the bridge by the lurid glare of torchlight, and heard the dark waters surging under me. The gate was opened by a man, who, as soon as I entered, closed it behind me. My horse was taken from me, and I was led up to the knight's room. It was a small circular apartment, nearly at the top of the tower, and scantily furnished. There, on a bed, lay the

old knight, evidently at the point of death. He tried to rise as I entered, and gave me such a look of gratitude and relief that it repaid me for my pains.

"I cannot thank you sufficiently, Count of R., said he, 'for granting my request. Had I been in a state to travel I should have gone to you; but that was impossible, and I could not die without first seeing you. My business is short, though important. Do you know this?' And he drew from under his pillow, my long-lost fish. Of course I knew it; and he went on. 'How long it has been in this house, I do not know, nor by what means it came here, nor, till quite lately, was I at all aware to whom it rightfully belonged. It did not come here in my time, nor in my father's time, and who brought it is a mystery. When I fell ill, and my recovery was pronounced to be impossible, I heard one night, a voice telling me that I should not die till I had restored the fish to the Count R. of Breitenburg. I did not know you; I had never heard of you; and at first I took no heed of the voice. But it came again, every night, until at length in despair I wrote to you. Then the voice stopped. Your answer came, and again I heard the warning, that I must not die till you arrived. At last I heard that you were coming, and I have no language in which to thank you for your kindness. I feel sure I could not have died without seeing you.'

"That night the old man died. I waited to bury him, and then returned home, bringing my recovered treasure with me. It was carefully restored to its place. That same year, my eldest brother, whom you know to have been the inmate of a lunatic asylum for years, died, and I became the owner of this place. Last year, to my great surprise, I received a kind letter from the King of Denmark, restoring to me the office which my fathers once held. This year, I have been named governor to his eldest son, and the king has returned a great part of the confiscated property; so that the sun of prosperity seems to shine once more upon the house of Breitenburg. Not long ago, I sent one of the silberlingen to Paris, and another to Vienna, in order that they might be analysed, and the metal of which they are composed made known to me; but no one is able to decide that point."

Thus ended the Count of R.'s story, after which he led his eager listener to the place where these precious articles were kept, and showed them to her.

STORY OF THE INCUMBERED ESTATES COURT.

IN TWO CHAPTERS. II. THE OPERATION.

In this way, then, the court came into the world. It should have been announced officially, in this wise: "On the — ult., at Westminster, the United Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland, trins!" for there were to be three judges.

Even out of so dry a function as an official appointment, came something like a snatch of romance. The Master of the Rolls in Ireland, cast-

ing about for the very fittest person, pressed the office on the eminent conveyancer, Mr. Christie, who first hesitated, then declined. "But," said the eminent conveyancer, "I could name a young man, whom nobody yet knows, who is a first-rate mathematician and a first-rate lawyer, who would be just the person:" and to the young man whom nobody knew, plodding laboriously in chambers, toiling at his legal plough, deputies came to offer the crown. Law, then, has its flower-beds and its flowers; and the young man whom nobody knew, left his mortgages and his draughting, to have and to hold prematurely, all that and those the dignity and powers of office, with all the rights, profits, easements thereunto appertaining.

To this Act, too, should etymologists be grateful. During the earlier debates that first syllable fluctuated uneasily betwixt *en* and *in*. But now the omnipotence of parliament has decreed that *incumbered* estates shall be sold; but not *en*-cumbered.

These high judicial auctioneers set up their rostrum in an old-fashioned street of red brick, of the last century's pattern, in a collapsed nobleman's house, where the mammoth marble chimney-pieces and the arabesques on the ceiling seemed much out of keeping with its new functions. Nearly opposite, was the mansion of the husband of Marguerite Countess of Blessington, whose ample estates shall, by-and-by, be submitted to their manipulation. With an unprecedented despatch, an admirable code of orders and regulations was framed in about six weeks; and on the twenty-fifth of October, eighteen hundred and forty-nine—one of the greatest days of all the great days for Ireland—the first petition was presented. The name of this courageous postulant should be known; still more, that of the first victim, the protomartyr of the law revolution, who, even in his dissolution, must have been soothed by the sweet sense of an enviable priority. The petitioner, then, was Joseph Walker; the protomartyr was one James Balfe, Esquire, or as it was always put, with a generous delicacy on the part of these tribunals—In re, or in the matter of James Balfe, Esquire, of Southpark, Owner. Beatified Balfe! shortly shall you receive your crown!

Take it that we are now a famished mortgagee; let us give instructions to Doolin and Company, the eminent firm of Bachelor's-walk, and proceed to sell our incumbered estate in the regular way. Our relations are somewhat after this fashion:

About five-and-thirty years ago, it came to pass that the Right Honourable Charles Henry DEELISH, BARON SAVOURNEEN, and Earl of TUMBLETOWERS, of Tumbletowers, Co. Mayo, and of Kilgallagher Lodge, Co. Galway, and of Lower Dominick-street, Dublin, happened to be pressed for money, and was prevailed on to give the preference to the English market. The sum was contemptible—fifty thousand pounds—a mere fleabite, as his lordship's solicitor humorously put it; so, the security being substantial, we, or our trustees—for we were then

minor—agreed to advance the fleabite, and took a mortgage for the amount. For three years, as we find from unpublished data, "favours" continued to reach us with extraordinary punctuality from T. Shine Murphy, Esq., his lordship's agent over the Kilgallagher property; and it was then remarked that they began to arrive in an irregular and fitful way: the intervals, however, lengthening in a steadily increasing ratio. By-and-by the communications of T. Shine Murphy, Esquire, began to be less and less satisfactory, taking the shape of fragmentary payments, wholly disproportioned to the amount due; the balance being filled in with a cheque for promises to a very handsome amount. It grieves me to state that some time after things came to be upon this footing, all communication with T. Shine Murphy, Esquire, ceased abruptly; and from that time no notice was taken of letters, protests, or even gentle legal remonstrances. The only resource, then, was the eminent firm of Doolin and Company, of Bachelor's-walk; and we were presently aboard a slow and heavy hulk, putting out to Chancery with the traditional speed. Then, too, it was discovered that we were but part of a sort of convoy; consort to some dozen or so of hulks with similar sea-going qualities, all proceeding contemporaneously. My lord was abroad in foreign parts with his son, Lord Savourneen, and the Honourable Miss Deelish; and curious to say, was deriving a comfortable income out of an arm which had been considered hopelessly "bad," and of a "standing" that dated back beyond the Chancery suit, but which had been restored by means of a patent lotion.

Pursuant to our instructions, the eminent firm of Doolin and Co. have presented a petition humbly praying that the estates of the Right Hon. the Earl of Tumbletowers may be submitted to public competition, and the proceeds applied to satisfy the claims of your petitioner. This document is laid before us, and we are astonished to find that it is utterly illegal—so far as being outrageously brief and succinct, and setting out in plain intelligible English what it means to express. We see, too, that the eminent firm has been at the trouble of collecting into one focus, as it were, all the other charges on our nobleman's estate: presenting thus, in a very handy shape, a pretty little narrative of his liabilities. These exceeding half our nobleman's rental (with a very handsome margin in the present instance), there is found to be no impediment to a sale. It will be matter of surprise how the eminent firm came into possession of such private details, without prying into the tin cases, where lie stored up the mortgages, deeds, settlements, and muniments, of the Incumbered Nobleman. But, since the reign of Queen Anne, every such instrument has been exactly registered; and all lenders applied to for moneys, have only to diligently thumb over this huge dictionary of incumbrances. No one lends without being himself entered in the lexicon; and no one lends without seeing who has lent. In this fatal ledger, therefore, is focused the

whole land liability of the country. In England only two counties enjoy this privilege, and the incumbrances, instead of being brought together in a complete tableau, are scattered broadcast over the solicitors' offices of the kingdom. These "very Irish" proceedings are sometimes well worthy of imitation.

The commissioner gratifying us with a mere formal order for sale, we discover that we have been inviting the Incumbered Nobleman to meet us before the commission, and make any little objections that may occur to him against this rather sudden proceeding: which, indeed, is only reasonable. Accordingly, if he has anything to say, he will "come in" on a particular day and "show cause;" if he has not, he will allow matters to take their course. The Incumbered Nobleman makes no sign; so we obtain "an absolute order" for sale.

The case proceeds vigorously. In a few days we are surprised at seeing advertisements, labelled in one corner, "In the matter of the Estate of the Right Hon. the Earl of Tumble-towers," staring at us from every newspaper, requiring all parties, in severe and stern language, to take notice that such an order has been made. Then follows a protracted intermission, during which, we are informed, that the eminent firm is engaged in "making searches"—that is, consulting the Incumbrance Dictionary—drawing out a compact little epitome of "title," which shall show how it came into the possession of the Incumbered Nobleman. We find also that the eminent firm has taken the mail train down to the estate in question (a very disturbed district), and has personally waited on the occupying tenants at their residences, inquiring from each all particulars as to the exact nature of their tenancy: a proceeding naturally received with much mistrust and suspicion. Some of these poor souls, thinking to foil the inquisitors whose questions only concealed some sinister design, shut themselves up in an artful reticence, and decline furnishing any information. The Brothers Cody (Teague and Larry) received many compliments for their skilful baffling of what were called the "Dublin schamers," whom they sent away wise as they came. But, alas for the Brothers Cody! The result only was that the estate was sold, "discharged" of their lease, and the purchasers not having their names in his rental, declined to recognise the tenure of the Brothers Cody.

By-and-by all these labours of the eminent firm, result most unexpectedly in a handsome folio volume, elegantly printed, and copiously illustrated with lithographic plans, vividly-coloured drawings, sections, and elevations, together with tabulated columns showing the tenancies, rents, and acreage—in short, such a complete topographical picture in one volume—of his estate as must have astonished the Incumbered Nobleman himself. Considering that some eight thousand estates have been sold, it may be conceived what a valuable library, as illustrating the country, this sort of literature must be; and

there are painstaking men who have been provident enough to collect the whole series.

Again have more severe and menacing notices burst out in newspaper columns, and the general public is sternly bidden to take notice that on a particular day, some two or three months off (to give time for its being properly noised abroad), will be set up and sold, the several "denominations" of land, "hereinafter specified," in eighty-five lots, as in the following schedule:

SUMMARY OF LOTS.

Denomination.	Statute Acres.			Net Annual Rental.		Ordnance Valuation.	
	A.	R.	P.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
Knockskilly	569	0	0	215	16 7½	260	0 0
Drumbunlon	300	0	0	200	0 6	210	0 0
Ballyshambo	410	6	0	250	6 7	270	0 0
Killemall	26	3	0	30	5 0	41	0 0

For its space of two months or so this denunciation looks out warningly from its ambuscade in the advertising columns. It reaches even the Right Honourable the Earl of Tumble-towers, enjoying his lotion annuity afar off at Florence, in a corner of a well-known local print, the Mayo Wrangler. That journal observed, with regret, that the ancestral estate of a time-honoured and illustrious family which had not of late years resided among us, would, next week, be brought under the ruthless and destroying hammer. The grief of the local print was very unaffected, yet that balm which comes of Gilead takes many soothing shapes. The advertisement of the coming holocaust, blazed in conspicuous type, forms a column of the local journal.

The space of two months being all but run out, and copies of the illustrated topographical memoir having fluttered across the sea to every noteworthy coffee-house and news-room in the kingdom, it is presumed that a decent amount of notoriety has been obtained. Vulgar agriculturalists, mean-souled graziers, have been measuring critically those Corinthian meads. The sacred demesne has been broken up into convenient "lots" with a horrid profanity to encourage the growth of "a small proprietary." The Incumbered Nobleman himself has not yet realised it. The old protecting spirits from Heavenly High Chancery, reference, decree to account, and other angels of protraction, will still descend, even at fifty-nine minutes past ten—on the stroke of the eleventh hour—and interpose.

The fatal morning has at last come round, and we, the famished baffled long-outraged mortgagee feel an Indian pleasure in going down to see this scalping of our enemy. There is a splendid time coming, and no waiting a little longer. So we stride through the great hall of the Incumbered Nobleman's mansion, where my lord and my lady's chairs used to wait during those fashionable parties before the Union, and make straight for the great auction-room.

Judicial auctioneer is sitting afar off, aloft in his rostrum, knocking down statute acres, roods, and perches, according to his function, but with a grave and measured utterance. Some one points out that this is the third commissioner—or the

young man whom nobody knew—but who has since got to be rather better known. There is a crowd of solicitor interest, of agricultural, metropolitan, local, and other divergent interest, who are all furnished with the topographical memoir, and contend for lots with a savage competition. It is hard not to admire the professional manner in which judicial auctioneer does his work, for all the world as though he had been bred to it: falling into the correct cadences of suspension, of pathetic entreaty, of remonstrance, and often one last lingering appeal of suspension, all conveyed without any vulgar iteration. There is something so piquant in this notion of a judge flourishing his hammer and inviting bids, that it is to be regretted the function should have since been delegated to meaner hands. Finally, we find that judicial auctioneer, who has all this time been working briskly through Knoekskilly, Drum-bunnion, and other euphonious denominations, is now “declaring the purchaser” for the last lot, and has left the Incumbered Nobleman without a rood. The family castle of Tumbletowers, an awe-inspiring mass of turrets and battlements, which, with its fittings and decorations, was said to be contracted for at some fifty thousand pounds, was included in the last lot, and absolutely did not swell the price one shilling. To be sure, the builder’s little account had never yet been settled, and it was likely that his heirs and assignees walking nearly last in the procession of incumbancers, might come in for a thousand or so of his bill. But it has been remarked that, somehow, a cruel blight waits upon these noble but unpaid-for tenements, which by the unhappy law of incumbered sales scarcely swell the price by a few pounds. The rich demesne lands are purchased at good figures, and the noble but unpaid-for mansion is thrown in.

An inflexible strictness, reaching almost to the casuistical, marks all the dealings of the judicial auction-room. A sort of code peculiar to itself has gradually grown up. Once the mystic solemnity of “declaring the purchaser” has been gone through, the sale is decreed eternally. Bidders, napping for an instant—whispering or inattentive—have, within a second after that final declaration, been known to offer thousands over the price—and have been eternally refused by the incorruptible Medes sitting aloft upon their rostrum.

The tradition of that first inaugural sale still survives. The name of the earliest victim should surely descend with a certain notoriety. He who was thus exposed mercilessly to the fury of the Jacobins was called, surnominally, Balfe—baptismally, James—and the first morsel cast to the hungry executioners was all that and those the lands, tenements, and hereditaments of Southpark, in the County of Roscommon. The day of immolation was Friday, February the twenty-second, eighteen hundred and fifty; the price fetched, equivalent to some three-and-twenty years’ purchase. A notable day. Bidding was at first a little languid, owing to the

novelty of the thing, and the chief commissioner, a Baron of the Exchequer, gently remonstrated. “We are not,” said he, “about to adopt the phraseology of the auction-room, and say, ‘Going, going!’ at every fresh bid.” The remark of another commissioner brought the thing home to each spectator in a startling manner: “The purchaser can have his conveyance executed, sealed, and delivered this very day.” “And,” added the third commissioner, a little facetiously, “it will be satisfactory to him to know that a very small box indeed will hold the conveyance!” A small box! They were as yet scarcely familiar with their tools and machinery; for the printed form of conveyance barely fills twenty lines, or half a page of duodecimo print. By-and-by, it was expanded into a single skin of parchment, which even included a map.

No wonder that this unworthy spirit of abbreviation should be resented. From Irish Chancery-lane, rose a deep cry of disquiet. The profession had been betrayed, even “sold!” the legitimate fruits of its spoilation cut off. Now, were remembered with a regretful feeling, reaching almost to affection, the soft protraction, the legal sweetness long drawn out, of the olden Chancery days. Generous professional minds could now only think of their benefactress with an amiable longing. “Give us back, give us back,” they shrieked, “the professional wild freshness of receivers’ accounts, of answers, of exceptions to masters’ reports! The bark is still there, such as it is, but the barristerial waters are gone!” It is on record that a solicitor’s bill for costs, searches, drafting, conveyance, and other charges, was actually presented under the new system at the degrading figure of some eight or ten pounds. After this cruel stab, well might the profession cover up its head decently in its gown, and sink down, Cæsar-like, at the base of the next convenient statue.

The sacrifice of the Tumbletowers estate being thus complete, we are given to understand that fourteen days of grace will be granted to the purchasers to “bring in” their moneys. Their moneys are “brought in” to the Bank of Ireland, which has often held floating balances of nearly half a million sterling, to the credit of the court, and is reputed to turn some forty thousand a year by the temporary manipulation of those funds. A few purchasers have applied to be released from their bargains, on the ground of mistakes and errors in the rental, discovered afterwards; some still fewer have made default and subjected themselves to the disagreeable process of the court known as “attachment.” The money being thus paid down and the land delivered, the distribution among creditors follows next. Then sets in the storm and battle of incumbancers, hitherto combined against the common enemy, now distracted with an internecine competition. They stand upon the order of their going, or rather coming. He that is first, is paid first; those who fall under the unhappy category of “puisne,” or later and latest in time, must stand by and look

on ruefully as the funds melt away. There is but a poor chance of its lasting out to their turn; a still poorer of there being a margin over for that hapless puiſne incumbrancer of all, the owner. Therefore do they battle with one another for priority, and strive to trample their way through the crowd to the front. But one week is allowed on an average for this struggle, and the cloud of vultures (birds with mortgages, judgments, and other charges, in their talons) who are wheeling in the air in disorderly circles, are at last allowed to swoop in their turn and each to carry off his morsel. There are some thirty or forty proprietors now over the fair lands of Tumbletowers, and we, no longer a famished mortgagee, have returned to our own country with a cheque for principal and interest in our pocket.

Remains now, to sum up the labours of these vigorous backwoodsmen, who, with their stout legal axes, have entered into the bush country and cleared whole miles of incumbered districts. From the day of the fatal *auto da fé*, when unhappy James Balfie, Esquire, of Southpark, headed the procession in his San Benito shirt, on that twenty-second of February, eighteen hundred and fifty, down to the last day of sacrifice in eighteen hundred and fifty-eight, it is registered that nearly two millions of acres, or about one-seventh of the available surface of the country, has been disposed of by public auction. Nearly five-and-twenty millions sterling has been paid into the hands of the unflinching triumvirs, who nicely weighed and determined conflicting claims, representing a sum of some four-and-twenty millions. Nearly four thousand petitions from creditors have been presented, praying for a sale; eight thousand estates have been brought to the hammer; and some four thousand titles have been scrutinised by the triumvirs themselves. For this hodman's work was part of their laborious round of duty; and each personally waded through those dirty waves of vellum and faded yellow paper on which the true title to an estate usually drifts down. Indeed, it is a curious feature in the whole proceeding, that many who protested against the new innovation, and forecast innumerable dangers, own that their predictions were falsified by the special and exceptional character of its administrators—by the jealous care and untiring watchfulness of the three commissioners. The old-fashioned Chancery Dilly rumbled on at a slow walk, and was ten years distributing a million sterling. The new legislative engine dashes by, express, and scatters five-and-twenty millions within the same space.

Many wise seers and prophets, and some hopeful men, went sadly astray in their vaticinations. There was to be a complete shifting of proprietary, a fierce irruption of moneyed Saxon bone and sinew; and that curious surgical process, the opening of an Hibernian artery and the introduction by mechanical agency of a foreign ichor, would be performed satisfactorily. The result astounded even those who looked with apprehension on the certain extinguishment of a brave and faithful pea-

santry. Out of eight thousand five hundred and fifty purchasers, it was found that only three hundred and twenty-four were of the foreign element: the overwhelming balance of eight thousand two hundred and twenty-five, being natives. Thus, too, was in part remedied what was pointed out by the Devon Commission as the most fatal hindrance to the advancement of the country: the absence of a middle-class proprietary with small holdings. It was noticed that the foreign element introduced itself early in the first rush, but afterwards wholly disappeared. Poor feeble Dame Chancery it was still destined, even indirectly, to persecution; for it has been ascertained that in the infancy of the new court, when it had hardly reached to the two hundred and thirtieth petition, no fewer than four hundred equity suits stopped short, stricken with paralytic seizure, and collapsed.

It was hardly to be expected that these new captains, strange to their work, could have got through the thick of this mangle-mangle of figures, acres, maps, surveying, conveyancing, law, and auctioneering, without some casualties. Some bad legal seamanship might reasonably be looked for, and handsomely extenuated. It was no fault of theirs, that in that glutting of the market, in the earlier days, land should have gone off at miserable sacrifices. There were instances of estates sold at ten years' purchase, which, three or four years later, fetched twenty-five: to the luckless owners' mortification. There was actually a tradition of one accursed domain which, under some unholy blight, brought but *one* year's purchase! The rental was set down at six hundred pounds, and it fetched but six hundred pounds! But on scrutiny it proved that this was an airy impalpable rental, which, being drawn from miserable paupers and shattered tenements, on which, instead of roofs, lay a load of hopeless arrears, shrank into a very mean rental indeed, more than handsomely represented by that one year's purchase. There was something like abuse in that instance pointed to by Lord St. Leonards, where a creditor for eleven pounds contrived to have an estate of six hundred a year sold for his demand. In that legend we may justly suspect misapprehension, or varnish of some kind. As to the law, such captains were safe enough; but how was it with them in that matter of surveying—that manipulation of nearly three million acres? Judge Hargrave (the young man whom nobody knew) owns penitentially to some failing of this nature. "In one or two instances," he says, "we encroached a little on the adjoining property, principally bog; but the compensation was so trifling and ridiculous that the injured party usually gave up the point." A few rods of bog, astray in some three million of acres!

Some three or four cases of greater hardship stand against the commissioners. Three or four persons have suffered out of—take it to be a million others, whom they have dealt with. A not very heavy per-centage. The wisest law is but a beneficent Juggernaut, which must crush some few victims.

There was "the great case" of Errington and Rorke, which travelled up slowly from the Assizes to the Court of Queen's Bench, from the Court of Queen's Bench to the Court of Exchequer Chambers, and from the Court of Exchequer Chambers to the House of Lords; and on which hung more serious questions than unprofessional outsiders dreamed of.

A Mr. Rorke had the misfortune to be a tenant, in the enjoyment of a lease for three lives, upon an estate which was about to undergo the salutary purging by fire, of the Incumbered Estates Court. With other tenants he received due notice, furnished his lease, had its existence duly acknowledged, and went his way secure and comfortable in mind. The sale took place. Adjoining lots were sold, but not the lot in which Rorke was interested. Before matters were concluded, one of the purchasers, Mr. Errington, proposed to exchange a portion of his newly acquired territory for the lot which had *not* been sold, and which was in possession of the unconscious Rorke. Through some unhappy misapprehension, this was agreed to; a formal conveyance was executed; and luckless Rorke, dreaming in fancied security of his three lives and certain terms, was one morning confounded at finding himself considered as an interloper and trespasser. There was no mention of his lease in the conveyance. He was promptly dealt with, by ejectment; Mr. Errington having only to show his conveyance to the jury. But the point was "saved" and carried to a higher tribunal. The judges were strangely divided. It did, indeed, appear that it was the intention that the title given by the court should be almost of an omnipotent character, indefeasible, not to be disturbed by mistake or any possible contingency. Still it was urged that it could scarcely have been contemplated that in selling Mr. A.'s incumbered estate, Mr. B.'s adjoining and flourishing domain might, through a mistake, slip into the conveyance and be irrecoverably handed over to a purchaser. The discussion began to excite intense alarm. For some seventeen to eighteen millions sterling had been already invested on the faith of this parliamentary title, which was held out as being secure against all the world; and vision of newly-found flaws, and fresh legal groping among those hateful yellow deeds and parchments, sat as horrid nightmares on the breasts of purchasers. The battle was accordingly fought out, over again, at the bar of the House of Lords.

There, the law lords condescended with the unhappy tenant, and the exceeding hardship, but felt themselves constrained to support the Incumbered Estates Court and the judgment of the court below: the Lord Chancellor dwelling specially on "the very masterly and satisfactory manner" in which Chief Justice MONAHAN had dealt with the case—a name now very familiar to the public from the unprecedented eulogy which was poured upon it from all sides of the House of Lords, and which the Lord Chancellor characterised as belonging to the "ablest and most enlightened judge that ever adorned the bench!"

There was Colonel Keough's case—a case of exceeding hardship. This gentleman's estate had been submitted to the process of being saved, yet so as by sale; the money had been distributed, but, unluckily, in paying off an old judgment debt, the commissioners had paid the wrong person. When all was concluded, when the moneys were disbursed, and when the estate was in possession of the new purchasers, the original judgment creditor appears upon the scene, and forces the late proprietor to discharge this debt a second time. It was cruel "miscarriage" of justice, as the indulgent phraseology of the law would put it, and the victim has petitioned the House that some special relief may be granted to him. The House has recently determined that justice should be done, and that the injured officer should be recouped the full sum.

These are cases of hardship, truly, where the innocent have suffered for the general good. Rorke and Keough are as the canonised martyrs of the Incumbered Estates reform. But where, after all, has the huge legal diligence rumbled on, and run over so few?

In the year eighteen hundred and fifty-eight the term of this wonderful tribunal ran out; and in the month of August it passed away quietly and without a struggle. It had been long known to be ailing, for the strange reason that it had no work to do: its labours in the last month of its existence dealing with some seventeen or eighteen petitions, or about four and a half to each judge. What would we have? Its functions were accomplished. There was nothing left for it to sell; there were no more patient mortgagees, exasperated by long suffering, to petition. Everybody was paid. Nobody was incumbered of land. These are, indeed, the great days for Ireland. A newer form of machinery is now at work, under the title of the Landed Estates Court, and is meant to deal with unincumbered as well as incumbered lands; with a wider philanthropy, it opens its arms even to any little dwindled lease under sixty years. Any owner now, nervous as to his title, may come in and have it riveted and steel-plated, and made capable of resisting all attacks.

The whole tendency of both these systems is to promote a free transfer of land; so that the conveyance, perfect and complete in itself, may pass from hand to hand, a land bank-note, and of which the owner may divest himself at a moment's notice, like railway shares or other scrip. Such a system is already at work in certain foreign countries, and is found to answer well.

For the end, remains the pointing of the moral. What may be done with five-and-twenty millions may surely be done with ten times that sum. There is a huge superfluity in Great Britain, already handsomely burdened; there are mortgagees hungering and thirsting after their proper moneys, and labouring through the protracted formalities of the English Court of Chancery, to recover it. The cumbrous engines of that establishment are too slow and old-fashioned for the work of the age, even after

all alterations and remodellings. They should be taken down, and new machinery put up with all convenient speed.

CURIOUS DISCOVERY IN WHITECHAPEL.

EXTRAORDINARY springs have been discovered in various places at different times, and have been duly subjected to chemical analysis. Science has declared some to be alkaline, chalybeate, or saline, and others to be either carbonated, or flavoured with sulphur. Fashion, rallying round one or other of these springs, has caused "spas" to be built, and has converted quiet inland villages, or obscure London outskirts, into popular watering-places. Fashion, again, either recovered from temporary indisposition, or drawn off by mysterious influence to the worship of new gods, has basely and gradually deserted these places, after raising them into short-lived importance. What has become of St. Chad's Well in the parish of St. Pancras, and of that metropolitan Cheltenham in the High-street of Islington, where Lady Mary Wortley Montagu resorted to "take the waters"? What trace is there now, in the neighbourhood of Sadler's Wells Theatre, of that "New Tunbridge Wells" which Beau Nash honoured with his presence when he could be spared from Bath? A small, mangy "Islington Green" exists, on which it is proposed to erect a statue to Sir Hugh Myddelton; and a few trees cast their cool shadows across the bonnet-shops and jewellers' windows still forming the one solitary Boulevard in London. This is all. St. Chad's Well—like the old Clerk's Well—is swallowed up by the "Underground Railway" as it passes through King's-cross. But whatever peculiar metropolitan waters may have been found at different times, such as no country wells have ever given forth, Whitechapel has been made famous by one of the most curious of these discoveries.

About twenty years ago, in the middle of a very hot summer's day, a respectably-dressed young woman was observed sitting on a doorstep in an east-end thoroughfare. Her manner was bewildered, and her speech was incoherent. A policeman coming up in the course of a few minutes, asked her where she lived, and with some little difficulty she told him "the dish-tillillery." As there were not half a dozen distilleries throughout London, she was supposed to refer to an establishment of the kind in the neighbourhood, and thither she was conducted with as little delay as possible. She was at once recognised and admitted as Mary the housemaid.

There were several theories with regard to the condition of this housemaid. Charitable people traced it to the heat of the weather; uncharitable people traced it to residence at a distillery. The popular idea was, that in such a place there must be as much gin as water, and that the servants had unchecked liberty to draw either liquor. Some, thought it was a pity that steady young women should be thrown in the way of so much temptation; others wished they

had the young woman's unlimited control over a spirit tap. Of course the young woman's story, that she had tasted nothing but water, was received with incredulity. Even when she admitted that she had drunk rather freely of the simple fluid, in consequence of the heat of the weather, the incredulity was not lessened. This was one result of living at a distillery.

A few weeks after this occurrence, still in one of the hottest of the summer months, two more of the distiller's female servants were taken unwell. Their illness showed itself chiefly in a tendency to dance and sing songs in a defiant manner, and a disinclination for work. According to their own account, they had tasted nothing but a can of water, and, of course, no one who looked at them believed such a barefaced assertion. Certain symptoms of drunkenness are not easily mistaken, especially when they appear in persons employed at a distillery. The young women were doctored with strong tea, soda-water, and other well-known restoratives, and some care was taken to conceal their indisposition from their employer. This gentleman, however, became aware of the "accident," as it was called, and very generously took no notice of it. Perhaps, as a distiller, he could hardly object to a little drunkenness, even when it appeared in his own establishment; at least, some of his enemies said as much.

Those who know what a distillery is, could not very reasonably suppose that servants employed in the dwelling-house attached, had easier access to the wells of spirit, than any stranger passing the outer gate. As the government has a direct interest in every half-pint of whisky distilled from malt—pure spirit distilled from malt is called whisky—the excisemen have really more control over the premises than the master. These "officers of inland revenue," as they now style themselves, lock up vats, outbuildings, vaults, and coppers, with patent locks, signed and sealed; and the proprietor of the works can only look at his property with the consent of one of these officers. Baths of fiery spirit may be floating underneath the yard or the dwelling-house; but no one can dip a bucket into them, except in the presence of an exciseman. So, those who reflected upon these facts were disposed to be charitable towards the female servants of the distiller.

Nothing more was thought about the matter for some weeks, until a new groom, belonging to the distillery, was heard telling a curious story concerning one of the horses in the stable.

"I giv' 'er 'er feed," he said—"a quartern an' a 'arf, an' threepenn'orth—which she took as usual, but when I tried 'er with the water, she shied at it. I thought, p'raps, the water was dirty, so I empties the pail in the yard an' fills it agen fresh from the same tap, but when I offered it to 'er she threw up 'er 'ead, an' shook all over."

"What did you do, then?" asked one of his listeners: an in-door man-servant, who waited at table.

"What did I do?" returned the ostler,

almost contemptuously, "why tastes the stuff, o' course, an' finds it as good cold whisky-an'-water as I ever put my lips to."

This extraordinary story came to the ears of the master, and the water-tap, which stood in the distillery-yard, was openly examined before all the servants. Water was drawn in tumblers, mugs, and pails, and tasted by all present. No one could detect the slightest flavour of spirit in the liquid, and the ostler, by common consent, was laughed at as a dreamer. He adhered to his story, but his tone was less confident than it had been before the experiment.

A few more weeks passed by, and the story of the temperate horse, who got nicknamed "Father Mathew," began to fade away. Even the excisemen, who were always about the place although not welcomed as members of the family, and who had taken a strong interest in the groom's narrative, ceased to talk about it. As the weather got much colder, no more mysterious cases of water-intoxication were heard of among the females of the household, and the establishment became as quiet and well-conducted as the establishments of a dean and chapter in a cathedral city.

Soon after Christmas, however, when the weather was very severe, this calm was broken by a discovery. A spring of water, possessing peculiar properties, suddenly bubbled up, in the middle of a public highway in Whitechapel. It was not a saline spring, nor an alkaline spring, nor was it flavoured with sulphur. It was not tested by any people more scientific than a knot of cabmen, boys, and east-end idlers; but, one of these bystanders—no mean authority on a question of ardent spirits—boldly pronounced the spring to be "some kind of gin." A fountain of gin spouting up in the middle of the roadway was such a remarkable fact, that no one present could believe it without tasting the liquor. A few hesitated to try the drink, more from fear than from holding temperate opinions; but when a score or two had drunk, and had loudly agreed with the opinion of the first taster, a general scramble for the precious water took place. The mob increased very rapidly, and several wiry boys who had glided in between the men and women, and had taken a fair share of the mysterious fountain, began to show symptoms of youthful intoxication. A few policemen came on the ground, but were unable to dispel the crowd, or account for the mystery. Some few drinkers suggested that charity had something to do with the spring, and that spirits-and-water were being unostentatiously supplied by a friend of the people. This suggestion was rather favourably received, and the health of the unknown benefactor was noisily drank by the mob, who seemed inclined to take all that the fountain could yield. The policemen had no rule to guide them in such an unexpected emergency, and they only formed part of the mob. Never, since the days when the old

water-conduits ran wine on high festivals, was such a scene witnessed in a public thoroughfare.

In the present state of the law and the national finance, it is impossible to cut the connexion between excisemen and ardent spirits. Wherever one is seen, the other is sure not to be far off: the spirits following the man, or the man following the spirits. The street-fountain of what turned out to be whisky-and-water was soon taken into custody by a body of inland revenue officers, who had more experience in such matters than the astonished policemen. They tasted the running liquid, and at once began to trace it to its source, unchecked by any theories about remarkable springs. A broken pipe of a well-known east-end water-company was the first thing discovered; and this pipe—burst by the frost—was traced at one end into the distillery where the female servants had made themselves "ill" with "water." The other end of this pipe was also traced, through a long distance, into another distillery, where it may possibly have conveyed whisky underground, without the knowledge of the excisemen, and without volunteering an account to government. This pipe was ostensibly a private branch water-main, laid down by the two distillers (who happened to be brothers) to supply their works with water, and no one was more astonished to find the pipe filled with cold "grog" than the suspected manufacturers. One or two scientific men stepped forward in their defence, and discoursed about peculiar waters, and remarkable springs, and several other theories, in explanation of the spiritual manifestations. The government, however, were not to be satisfied without a trial in a court of law; and a jury, after patiently hearing the case, inflicted a fine of seventy-five thousand pounds sterling on the two distillers. The sobriety of the maid-servants was incidentally vindicated; the ostler was relieved from the suspicion of being a madman; the excisemen were rewarded; the public revenue was benefited; and Whitechapel, in being deprived of a peculiar spring which might have converted it into a "spa," was doubtless the only actual loser.

NEW WORK

By SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON.

NEXT WEEK

Will be continued (to be completed in six months)

A STRANGE STORY,

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "MY NOVEL," "RIENZI," &c. &c.

On the 27th of September will be published, price 5s. 6d., bound in cloth,

THE FIFTH VOLUME

OF

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

Containing from Nos. 101 to 126, both inclusive.
The preceding Volumes are always to be had.

The right of Translating Articles from ALL THE YEAR ROUND is reserved by the Authors.